
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

September 2003

Next meeting – Monday 22 September
at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

Rain to bottle

The Society's next open meeting will feature an illustrated talk on an extremely important activity in Colwall – the bottling of Malvern Water. The speaker will be John Tyson who is quality manager at the bottling plant. He has been with Schweppes since 1978 and became connected with the Colwall factory in 1990.

He will talk about the history of Malvern Water and the geological factors: from rain to bottle. But he will also be able to give the background to the enormous rise in the consumption of bottle water and the important safeguards that are needed in its supply.

Refreshments will be served after the talk. Do bring your friends – non-members, who, we hope, will become members, are very welcome.

Mr Jenny Lind

Derek Lewis

Many thousands of words have been written about a renowned Colwall resident, the singer Jenny Lind, who spent her retirement at Wynds Point, British Camp. A few weeks ago, however, a web auction site, based in America, offered an autograph letter by Jenny Lind's husband, Otto Goldschmidt, about whom far less is heard.

He was born in Hamburg, Germany, and was nine years younger than his wife. He studied piano under Mendelssohn and toured America with the singer in 1851 as her accompanist. They married in Boston, Mass., in 1852.

The letter on offer showed Goldschmidt dealing with a rather tricky situation. Someone had sent him a score of an oratorio he had written on the subject of 'Ruth'. Goldschmidt had been working on a similar work – either an oratorio or cantata. However, he was clearly not put off. His own oratorio 'Ruth' was produced at the Hereford Musical Festival in 1867.

Rock Bottom (concluded) *Irene Southall*

After the violence of volcanos and earth movements, the 'Silurian' period which followed was much quieter. For millions of years the western slopes of the Malverns seem to have formed cliffs overlooking a warm tropical sea rich in marine life. When this sea was shallow it included coral reefs, but at other times it became too shallow – a series of muddy lagoons in which the mud hardened to shale.

This period is well represented in Colwall at many points. For instance if you walk down Evendine Lane you will actually pass through three belts of the ancient coral (limestone) alternating with three slightly flatter stretches on the shale. The last limestone (the 'Aymestry') presents a little cliff outcropping on your right. If you look closely you may even see little fossil creatures – plainly ancestral to some of those on the beaches of today.

Another relic of those ancient beaches are the rounded pebbles of Malvernian granite which were originally discovered by a young Victorian lady near the present West Malvern bus terminus. It is now difficult to identify the 'sycamore exposure' where Miss Phillips (sadly her first name is lost to Victorian etiquette) first pointed them out to her brother and his friends, but they can still be found in the upper part of the Gullet Quarry. To handle one of them when it is warm from the sunshine is to be helped to envisage a tropical beach with great rollers pounding the base of the cliff as they roll in from the western ocean, but there is not a surf rider in sight.

That beach probably lay astride the Tropic of Capricorn as future Britain drifted slowly north through the geological ages in which the old red sandstones of Herefordshire were laid down in near desert conditions. There comes a great gap in which Colwall offers little information. Probably the coal measures, jurassic limestone and chalk were laid down over what had gone before (even over the tops of the Malverns) but the uplifting of central Britain when the Atlantic Ocean opened up was so dramatic in its effect on the eastward flowing rivers and their power of erosion that all trace of those periods has been removed from most of the Welsh border counties. Today, when you lift your eyes from looking at the detail of rocks millions of years old, your wider view is of a landscape shaped by the ice over a mere million years of changing climate.

From the archive

In March 1950, Colwall was the subject of 'An adventure in radio in 5 weekly parts' written by Edward Livesey and broadcast under the title of 'An English Village'. A reference transcript of the programmes is available in Colwall library. The second programme was about the history of the village and included these extracts from the early *Parish Registers*. The broadcast comments of the consultant historian to the programme, W E Tate, are given after each extract.

Johan Turner the daughter of Catheryn Turner a young wandering woman (the father being unknown) was baptised the 7th day of February 1588.

The bastards of vagrants were a great trial to the parish, because the place of birth was responsible for them when they grew up. They might prove to be a cost to the poor law.

Joane son of Thomas Nicholls and Anne his wife wandering people baptised 23 September 1607. This Woman coming from Durric with her husband and there was delivered in Robert Sheppard's barn. Philip Jones, Joan King widow, and Elizabeth Powell were gossipes. [godparents]

One up to Colwall. When bastards and vagrants were baptised, often the churchwardens and other leading parishioners stood as their godparents. Most unusual.

Katherine Bennet alias Johnes, daughter by report of one John Bennet of Ross, out of wedlock, being lame and sick was conveyed from St. Johns neere Worcester, where she had served for a time, from constable to constable towards Ross, and came to Colwall on Sunday 25th Day of July 1619 into the house of Richard Hope constable within the jurisdiction of the peculiar of Barton Colwall where she deceased upon the Tuesday next following.

Poor, sick, crippled Katherine. Since she was a bastard she was legally settled in Ross, and any other parish where she was chargeable or likely to be so might take her up and send her back home again. So the parishioners of St. John's, anxious to keep down the rates, got their constable to descend on her and pack her off out of the village.

He passed her on to his colleague in the next parish, and so on – Katherine being the unwanted burden in a horrible game of pass the parcel – until she could go no further. Perhaps Richard Hope had a shade more humanity than his neighbours, perhaps he was afraid Katherine might die in transit and he be held responsible. Anyhow he took her into his own house for a couple of days and there she died. And in Colwall churchyard she lies to this day.



Programme three dealt with the wild life of the parish and included comments by naturalist F M Day, a schoolmaster at the Downs. The first was on the *orchids to be seen in Colwall 50 years ago*:

'I have found four different sorts of orchids in the fields. That's green wing, pyramids, scented and the frog. And in the woods eight kinds. That's two sorts of spotted, early purple, the butterfly, the tway blade, the birds' nest and the two helleborines *Epipactis latifolia* and *Epipactis purpurata*.'

I would be interested in how many of these 12 orchids can be seen today. I have not looked very far, but I have only seen 3 orchids, the common spotted and the broad-leaved helleborine from Day's list and what I think is a southern marsh orchid. I was interested that he found common spotted in the woods, whereas I have seen it mainly in fields.

Chris Sennett
