
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

March 2004

Chairman's Report

It's been a very active 12 months.

The sale of the aerial photographs, which were the basis of the pictorial map of the village, proved a great success. The pictures were displayed five times at various locations and many residents bought a picture of their house.

The Society has been delighted to publish several more studies of different aspects of Colwall's history. These are added to the archive, as well as other publications and pictures.

This year we are having a membership card printed. This will serve as a receipt for the subscription (still being kept at £5) and a reminder of the dates of the open meetings. It is not possible to print the speakers for an entire year, but I hope they will all provide evenings of interest and achieve the wonderful attendances we have seen in the past, which are such an encouragement to your committee.

Derek Lewis

Village Spring Clean, Saturday 20 March

Undeterred by strong winds and threatening skies, no fewer than sixteen intrepid members of the Society and three other, very welcome, Colwall residents gathered at the station approach to collect their black bags and grabbers and then disperse to scour the village streets and the rural lanes so far as Jubilee Drive, Mill Lane and Old Colwall.

Two hours later laden with twenty three bin-bags of cans, sweet papers and bottles they re-assembled in the Crown to enjoy hot coffee and exchange tales of the extraordinary detritus picked up on their beats – full crisp packets, empty champagne bottles and a stolen charity box. A lively debate ensued between the champions of grabbers and those who favoured gloved hands. We all hope that our efforts will enhance enjoyment of our hedgerows with their varied flowers and grasses and awakening blackthorn. Unfortunately, many bottles and cans remained in the fields and in our delightful streams out of reach of our eager grasp.

Michael Martin

Next meeting – Monday 26 April at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

'Managing the Malvern Hills and Commons in the 21st Century'

The next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting of the Society, and after the business agenda we shall be pleased to welcome Ian Rowat, the Director of the Malvern Hills Conservators as our guest speaker. He writes:

'The Malvern Hills Conservators have been protecting the Hills and Commons since 1884 and as such are one of Britain's oldest conservation bodies. We welcome the special relationship with Colwall Parish Council in managing Colwall Green. The Parish Council are the owners of the Green and the land comes under the Conservators' jurisdiction, which enables us to manage it in partnership.

Those that have walked the bounds of the Parish will appreciate how much of the hill land is actually in Colwall. During the presentation I shall be focusing on the land in Colwall Parish and explaining the issues surrounding its management.'

‘The Folk Who Lived on the Hill’

Three of the history booklets produced this year, describing Beacon Road and the houses and former industrial complex on West Malvern Road, were compiled by Tom Marsh. He describes his motivation for his research in a brief introduction.

In 1995 Colwall Parish Council celebrated its Centenary, prompting much research and a photographic and historical exhibition. In 1885, when the first council was set up, most of the population lived in the valley and were part of a long established agricultural community. There was a wide variety of shops in the village to meet everyday needs. For more they looked first towards Ledbury.

The population up on the Hill, some 500, were very different. Many of the inhabitants were ‘squatters’, or their descendants, who had settled there where the ancient Salt Track from Droitwich to Bosbury and beyond crossed the hills. They hoped to earn private ownership of their encroachments and scratched a living keeping chickens and pigs, working in the quarries and serving tourists and those walking on the hills doing the ‘Water Cure’. The reality was that though served by one Parish Council, Colwall consisted of two different and separate communities.

By the end of the 19th Century a strong community spirit existed on the Hill around the Wyche Cutting, despite it being parts of two parishes belonging to two different counties. On the East side, it was centred on Grundy’s Shop, Post Office and Bakery (1888). On the West side, an Infants’ School had opened in 1865. On Sundays services were held at this school and in a temporary Institute beside Grundy’s Shop. These ceased with the construction of the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Free

Church, both in 1910. Built under the Good Shepherd was the new Institute, a working men’s club open every day and used for a great variety of community purposes. On the site of Skot Transformers there was the Garage/Taxi service run by Mr Hill from the 1930’s onward. For well over a century there have been at least two public houses and a café in the area. For shorter periods, 25 years or more, there was a tailor, a bootmaker, butcher and more. Additionally there was a frequent and cheap bus service into Malvern. It is not surprising that the Hill Community had more contact with Malvern than Colwall.

Then in 1975 the unthinkable started to happen. Grundy’s Shop closed in 1977. About 1980 the garage closed. The Infant School closed in 1982 as did the Institute. The Good Shepherd closed in 1992. The Post Office and Newsagent, which had outlived Grundy’s, closed in 1998. The ‘Hill’ no longer had a shop of any sort.

Now in 2002 the ‘Hill’ is a different place. It has lost its meeting places, the occupants of houses change more frequently and almost all households have a car. Only since 1975 have Ordnance Survey maps had the words ‘Upper Wyche’ replaced by the words ‘Upper Colwall’. The inhabitants of the ‘Hill’ and of Colwall below have become more like each other, but those who live on the ‘Hill’ do not want the Community once there to be forgotten.

Those who wish to know more about living on the ‘Hill’ should read ‘Reflections on the History of Folk of the Area of the Wyche Cutting 1888-1988’ by George Grundy, which is available in the Millennium Room archive, and in Malvern library.

Following the article on mistletoe in the last newsletter, we are grateful to member Mike Fitzer for donating an interesting booklet ‘Grow your own mistletoe’ by his friend Nick Wheeldon from Lincolnshire. For many years Mr Fitzer has been supplying Nick Wheeldon with Christmas mistletoe which he grows in an old apple orchard on the boundary between Colwall and Mathon.

The mistletoe seeds may be attached to a tree from January to early April, when they start to germinate. Nick Wheeldon’s website is www.mistle.co.uk
