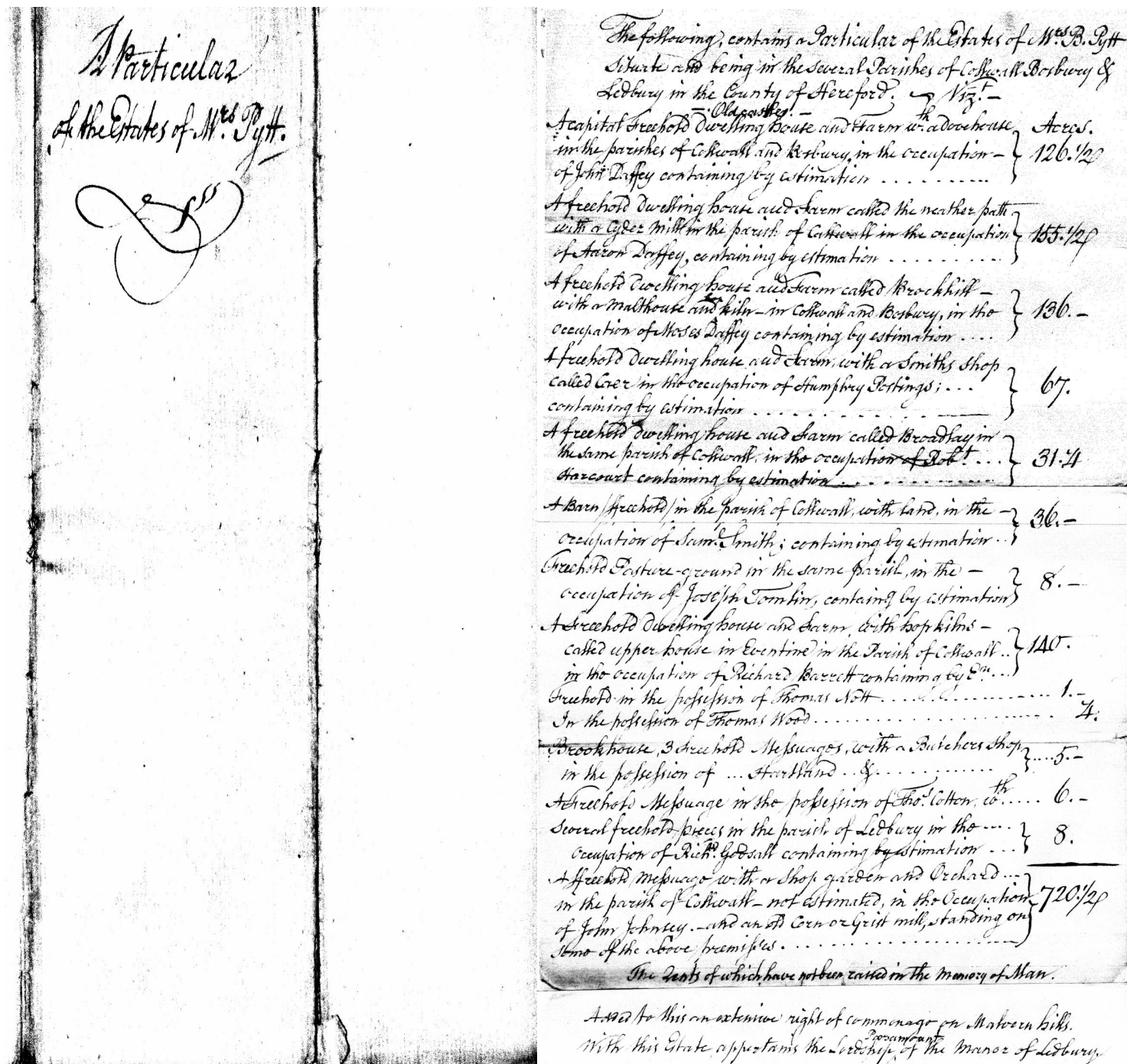


NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2012

**Colwall
Village
Society**

Revealing Our Heritage



Transcription of The Old Castle Estate of Mrs B Pytt by David Hodgson

The following contains a Particular of the Estates of M^{rs}. B. Pytt Situate and being in the several Parishes of Colwall Bosbury & Ledbury in the County of Hereford. ~ Viz:-

-Old Castle-

A capital Freehold dwelling house and Farm wth a dovehouse in the parishes of Colwall and Bosbury, in the occupation - of John Daffey containing by estimation 126.½ Acres

A Freehold dwelling house and Farm called the netherpath with a Cyder Mill in the parish of Colwall in the occupation of Aaron Daffey, containing by estimation 155.½ Acres

A Freehold dwelling house and Farm called Brockhill - with a Malthouse and ^{hop} kiln - in Collwall and Bosbury in the occupation of Moses Daffey, containing by estimation 136. Acres

A Freehold dwelling house and Farm with a Smiths Shop called Caer in the occupation of Humphry Postings; . . . containing by estimation 67 Acres.

A Freehold dwelling house and Farm called Broadlay in the same parish of Collwall, in the occupation of Rob^t Harcourt containing by estimation 31¼ Acres

A Barn /ffreehold/ in the parish of Collwall, with land, in the - occupation of Sam^e Smith; containing by estimation 36 Acres

Freehold Pasture -ground in the same parish, in the - occupation of Joseph Tomlin, containing by estimation 8 Acres

A Freehold dwelling house and Farm with hopkilns - called upper house in Eventine in the Parish of Collwall in the occupation of Richard Barrett containing by Eⁿ 140 Acres

Freehold in the possession of Thomas Nott 1. Acre.

In the possession of Thomas Wood ¼ Acre

Brookhouse, 3 freehold Messuages, with a Butchers Shop in the possession of ... Hartland ... & 5 Acres

A Freehold Messuage in the possession of Tho^s Cotton, wth 6 Acres

Several freehold pieces in the parish of Ledbury in the occupation of Rich^d Godsall containing by estimation..... 8 Acres.

A Ffreehold Messuage with a Shop garden and Orchard in the parish of Collwall- not estimated, in the Occupation of John Johnsey. - and an old corn or Grist mill, standing on some of the above premises.

Total Acreage..... 720½ Acres

The Rents of which have not been raised in the memory of Man.

Added to this an extension right of commonage on Malvern hills.

With this Estate appertains the Lordship Paramount of the Manor of Ledbury.



Views of Old Castle Farm (with acknowledgement to Andrew Grant, Estate Agents)

Vera Brittain Visits Colwall by Robin Everett
Extracts from her Diary for 1939

In 1939, when she was something of a celebrity as a literary and political figure, Vera Brittain, mother of Shirley Williams, visited Colwall where her son, John Brittain-Catlin, was a pupil at The Downs School.

Vera Brittain (1893-1970) and her husband (later Sir) George Edward Gordon Catlin (1896-1979), known as Gordon, led very active lives. She had published the work for which she is now most remembered, *Testament of Youth*, in 1933. This contained her reflections upon her experiences nursing World War I casualties as a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment. As a consequence she was in great demand to contribute articles to a variety of publications on left wing policies, feminism, birth control, child and maternity welfare and pacifism; additionally she was engaged as a popular speaker throughout Britain, Europe and the USA.

As young children, both John (b.21/12/1927) and Shirley (b.27/7/1930) were accustomed to being looked after by others, including the four servants maintained by the household. Initially they attended schools local to their Chelsea home, closely vetted by their mother to ensure that they conformed to her views upon educational policy. In April 1939 Shirley (affectionately known as Poppy) started attending boarding school at Swanage. John had commenced at The Downs before January 1939. Vera Brittain's diary for 18 January says: 'John went back to school today, 1.45 from Paddington. Sat writing quietly all morning at table & thought he was doing stamps; afterwards found he had left a notebook for me with three pages of most pathetic reactions about going back to school & his tears outlined on the cover. But he was very good at the station.....' The entry for the next day concludes: 'Miss John. Wished all day that we never sent him to boarding school – tho' threats of war and approach of Eton did seem to make it inevitable.' This mention of Eton indicates that the educational pathways for the children were already being planned. Another entry, (25 March 1939), after Brittain had been impressed by a party of visiting college girls from America, states: 'If only the world lasts, I feel all the more determined to send Shirley there before Oxford.'

The diary accounts of the days before her visit to Colwall may serve to illustrate Brittain's hectic lifestyle. On 12 February she had travelled to Newcastle to speak at a Peace Pledge Union meeting, leaving Shirley suffering from 'flu and running a temperature of 100°; the next day she went on to Glasgow for another speaking engagement before returning to London, using the train journey to continue working on material for the biography of her very close friend, Winifred Holtby (for whom she was literary executor). Back in London on 15 February she dealt with an accumulation of correspondence and on 16 February she made a speech at a meeting of the Parents' National Educational Union, where she met the wife of the headmaster of The Downs School: 'Mrs Hoyland was there to my surprise; she is the daughter of Dame Elizabeth Cadbury & was there representing her. She said John is now fit again'. (Amongst the correspondence awaiting her on return from Glasgow had been a note saying John was in the sick bay.) The next few days were spent working on the biography; seeing her husband off from Southampton for an American speaking tour (his 33rd Atlantic crossing); a shopping trip to Harrods; and on 22 February having her hair set, nails done and face massaged before lunching at the University Women's Club to meet with two wives of Arab delegates who were attending the Palestinian Conference. 'The two Arabs were lovely creatures, like smart Parisians.....Of the four Englishwomen, I was the only one who painted my lips, varnished my nails and wore clothes that didn't look as if they'd been put on after hanging in a cupboard for 5 years. Why, why, must social reform and political intelligence in the women of this country be associated with shiny noses & unwaved hair?....Oh! that University Women's Club – full of grim-looking desiccated spinsters in appalling tweeds. Heaven preserve Shirley from an academic career! A youngish woman visitor was there with two small girls & the University women looked astonished and quite affronted at their presence.'

This, then, was the woman who visited Colwall in February 1939, when Europe was again on the brink of war.



Vera Brittain (©PW20C)

Friday February 24th Colwall Mother & I came by the 1.45 to Malvern and took a car from Gt. Malvern to the Park Hotel, Colwall, for John's half-term week-end. John not available till to-morrow. Perfectly lovely day, getting warmer as the train went further west. Worcester looked like a heavenly city in the light of the setting sun. Reached Colwall just at sunset; sky aflame & the Malvern hills shone with a luminous roseate glow. Went for a short walk directly we arrived to show Mother the school before dark; heard cheerful voices & sounds of piano-practising coming from it. Walked on up the hill through the wood beyond; rich country scents everywhere, & clucking of chickens from the school farm. Radiant sky & hills growing darker against it as we went home. Hotel very comfortable; excellent food.....

Saturday February 25th Weather changed during the night; bitter wind sprang up; very cold; had nearly to close the window. Raining at breakfast time. Went to

fetch John at 10.30; found him standing hatless in the rain waiting for me. Brought him to hotel & dried his hair as he still had rather a stuffy cold. He had lunch with us & then as the rain had stopped the three of us walked over the hill to Malvern; it

started raining just before we arrived. We had tea at the Abbey Hotel; met Hilda Morgan¹ & Roger there. & all went together to the cinema to see *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, etc., as it was still raining. Got a taxi back at 7.0; dropped John & Roger at school and came back to hotel ourselves. Went along to the Hoylands' evening At Home at the school. Spoke to both Mr & Mrs Hoyland and told them G[ordon] was in America. I asked Mr Hoyland if he wanted to see me about J, as otherwise I wouldn't bother him, & he said No, he seemed to enjoy everything tremendously & had no problems except the ordinary problems of growing up. Put through trunk call to London when I got back at 9.30 to see how Shirley was – had previously tried to get on without success. She was quite all right but still awake & said goodnight to me herself.

Sunday February 26th Lovely day again, though bitter wind. Had unusual experience this morning of lying in bed in my east-facing bedroom & watching the early morning sun creep over the edge of the hill opposite till it flooded the room with light. Went for a long walk with John over the hill this morning; got nearly as far as the British Camp on the top of the highest hill; then descended through woods & fields to Colwall. Wonderful views everywhere – brilliant yet misty, with the blue-grey bareness of February.

After lunch went for another short walk around Colwall; then Hilda Morgan & Roger came to tea; discussed lecturing, writing books, schools, etc. This morning John & I saw a finch with a green head & pink breast; & this afternoon we passed a farm-orchard filled with baby pigs with bright pink ears. At 6.45 we went to the evening service. It was even more moving than last time – nothing is quite so poignant as boys' voices. Mr Hoyland told a little parable about people who lost their railway tickets & the Christian being someone who had taken a ticket to the City of God.

Monday February 27th J. came to breakfast – afterwards returned to school for the expedition. For the first time he left me without tears, waving his hand & running cheerfully in to the side door, & at last I feel satisfied that he is happy there. Took rooms at the hotel for G[ordon] & myself for next half-term. Mother & I came back to town by slow rather tedious trains; got back 3 p.m. & found Burnett² in bed with an "influenza throat" but Shirley quite well. Had her down to sleep in my room to keep her off the top floor.

That same evening, after an early supper, Brittain resumed her usual lifestyle when she '....went along to Kingsway Hall to be the only lay speaker at the "Christian Pacifist Message" meeting to launch the renunciation of war by a joint pacifist group from the Christian churches. The Hall was packed, with people standing in the Gallery.....'

The following months were ones of increasing concern about the international situation. Brittain continued her work on Holtby's biography and, as literary executor, oversaw the posthumous publication of her novel *South Riding*. The typescript of the biography *Testament of Friendship* was delivered to Harold Macmillan on August 2nd when they had a long talk. 'We discussed the possibility of war & both felt it might still be avoided.'

Reference: Alan Bishop [1986]. *Chronicle of Friendship: Vera Brittain's Diary of the Thirties 1932-1939*. Victor Gollancz Ltd. London.

Notes: 1. Hilda Morgan, wife of Charles Morgan who in the thirties was an admired best-selling novelist. As Hilda Vaughan, published many novels set in Wales.
2. Manservant, husband of housekeeper, both of whom were long-term domestic servants to the family.

Author's note: An extended version of this article has been deposited in the village archive. This gives fuller biographical detail about Vera Brittain and places her visit to Colwall within the context of her then current literary, social and political interests.

Future Talks

29th October 2012:

Tim Bridges: 'Coddington Church'

28th January 2013:

Mark Archer: 'The Restoration of Perrycroft'

22nd April 2013:

Dr Janet Cooper: 'The Work of the VCH (Victoria County History) at Eastnor'

16th September 2013:

Amanda Simons: 'British Camp'

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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