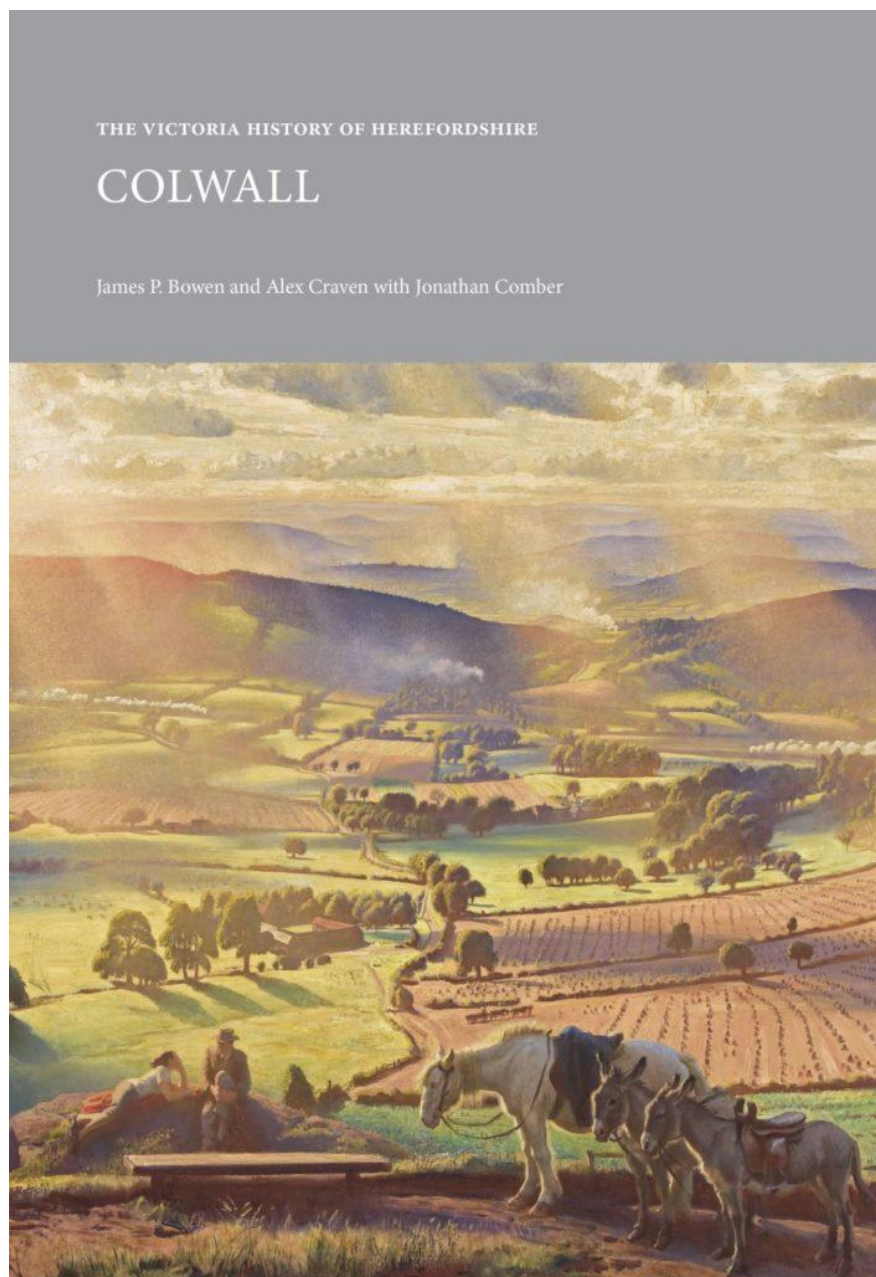


Newsletter - August 2020

Victoria County History Short on Colwall

We are excited to announce that the Victoria County History Short on Colwall has just been published. The Victoria County History (VCH) is an ongoing national project to write the history of every county in England. The project started in 1899 and was dedicated to Queen Victoria at that time.



The VCH aims to provide comprehensive histories of every county from the earliest archaeological records to the present day. Each county history has identical topics such as landscape and the built environment, through economic, social and religious history, and is published in an iconic red book. The VCH project is led and managed in London by the Centre for History of People, Place and Community at the Institute for Historical Research, University of London. Work on the VCH Colwall Short has been driven by the VCH Herefordshire Trust and their members, most of whom are volunteers.

The VCH shorts are a relatively new introduction and cover the history of an individual parish in a single publication. Other local parishes such as Bosbury and Eastnor already have their own versions. The VCH short on Colwall provides a fascinating insight into the history of this parish in an accessible and affordable way.

It can be bought from Ledbury Books and Maps, Three Counties Books in Ledbury, the café opposite the Malvern Hills Hotel, and The Wyche Inn.

It is also available online as a paperback for £14.00 or as an ebook for £5.00 from

CVS Annual General Meeting(AGM)

The 2020 AGM was held virtually by email and post. The new committee is:

Chairperson:	Liz Hill [REDACTED] [REDACTED] cvschair@colwall.info
Treasurer:	John Atkin [REDACTED]
Secretary:	<i>Vacancy</i>
Membership Secretary:	Paul Morrissey cvsmembership@colwall.info
Newsletter Editor:	Andy Ball cvsnewsletter@colwall.info
Archive:	Susan Bond cvsarchive@colwall.info
Committee Members:	Margaret Matthews

We do not currently have a Secretary. If any-one feels that they can give a few hours each year to help the running of the society, please contact Liz Hill.

Message from the Chairperson – Liz Hill

Thank you to every-one who responded to our AGM which had to be held in an unorthodox way this year. I wish to thank the retiring chairman, John Atkin, for all his hard work over his time as chairman and the interesting talks that he has arranged. I am pleased to say that he has agreed to stay on the committee as Treasurer. In a normal AGM, I would have stood up and you would have been able to put a face to the name. A photograph will have to suffice instead.

I first arrived in Colwall in 1987 and have lived in Mill Lane since then. Though I work as a computer scientist, I have had a long time interest in the historic landscape, which dates back to many seasons working on archaeological digs. It fascinates me how much you can glean about the history of the place not just from the buildings, but also from the bumps in the ground and the vegetation that grows above.

Once my children were born I became the first Colwall Tree Warden which led me to learn more about trees and their importance in the landscape. In 1998 I led a survey organized by the Village Society to record the ancient hedgerows of Colwall, which introduced me to the Colwall tithe map and the secrets which can be uncovered in maps.

I take over as Chairperson in unusual times. The committee has decided to cancel the planned September meeting because of the Covid-19 restrictions concerning gatherings. We have also put all other planned talks on hold, but will continue to review the situation in line with government guidance.

Please also note that there will be no membership cards issued this year.

In the mean-time we will continue to publish our newsletters and extend our website with more information about Colwall's history.

Our website address is cvs.colwall.info.



Colwall History on the Web: www.britainfromabove.org.uk



“Britain from Above” was a four year project (2010-2014) which aimed at conserving 95,000 of the oldest photographs in the Aerofilms collection, dating from 1919 to 1953.

The collection has been scanned into digital format and is now available to view on-line for free.

Typing “Colwall” in the search box shows that there are 7 photos of Colwall.

This one is of Colwall Stone in 1921, with the Colwall Park Hotel and Colwall railway station in the background, and Stone Drive and The Crescent in the foreground.

Recreating the Lost Wildflower Meadows - Lindsay Williams

When I first started helping out on my father’s dairy farm in the mid-1960’s the local wildflower meadows had already been destroyed. A trend repeated all over the UK. They were ‘improved’ with introduced ryegrasses, copious applications of artificial fertiliser and changed management techniques. So I was one of the first generation not to learn of the management of these richly diverse meadows from the preceding generation of farmers. The farming I was born into was productivity, monocultures, artificial fertilisers and pesticides.

The productivity increase came about with a huge toll in wildlife. Wildflower rich grassland has declined by 97% since the 1940’s. Now I am retired, I and others at Colwall Orchard Group are trying to relearn the rich heritage of wildflower meadows. But first we have to undo the changes wrought by years of improved farming techniques.

One of the most iconic wildflowers that has disappeared from our landscape is yellow rattle also called hay rattle.



This small, vividly yellow, flowered plant is very special. It parasitises, and so weakens, the grasses. Thus it creates a gap for it and other wildflowers to grow.

Why is it called hay rattle? Because its seeds are held in small pockets which rattle when shaken. I am told that this was an indicator that the hay was ready to be cut.

Unfortunately, as an annual, it was all too easy to eradicate. All that had to be done was prevent it seeding for a few years.



We have started to recreate wildflower meadows at Colwall Orchard Group’s two orchards at Colwall Village Garden and Lugg’s Mill Orchard, as well as Jane and my own small holding, Brookmead. Working with a very enthusiastic group of people we have also helped start over 20 more new meadows or garden meadows throughout Colwall and surrounds. This is possible by the generous donation of seed by the unfortunately few landowners who have kept the tradition of wildflower meadows.

We hope to reintroduce those iconic wildflower meadows that have almost disappeared from the landscape. We will have to relearn the management skills lost within only one or two generations but hope to have these beautiful meadows to pass on to the next generation.

Traditional hay meadows were managed by keeping stock (cattle, sheep and horses) out of the meadow as the grass started growing in Spring – a process called ‘shutting up’. In mid-summer, notionally sometime after the middle of July, the hay was cut and left to dry on the ground. It was then turned several times (scattering wildflower seeds) to help dry the hay before raking, removal and storage. Before the use of machinery cutting this would be done with a scythe and I understand that it was possible for one person to cut about an acre in a day. Raking and turning the hay was an even slower process. All of these harvesting activities were, and still are, very weather dependent and with the variable nature of the British climate it might be September before the hay crop was finally removed from the land. However, the variance in timing could be a benefit with a late harvest giving an advantage to those plant species present that tended to set seed later in the year.

Over many years wildflowers adapted to the meadows management regime and thrived. Unfortunately increasing meadows fertility with artificial fertilisers and spraying with herbicides resulted in grass dominated pastures. Increasing mechanisation and collecting silage instead of hay resulted in earlier harvesting times further selecting against wildflowers. Even the reduction of horses as they were replaced by mechanisation contributed to the move to silage, as horses cannot be fed silage and hay had to be grown specifically for the horses.

Taking a casual glance at the 1840s Tithing Map for Colwall I’ve found a plethora of meadow-based field names in the Parish including Wise’s Meadow, Parsonage Meadow, Brockhill Meadow, Long Meadow, Brockbury Meadow, Barton Meadow, Butler’s Meadow - to name but a few.

So how do we recreate wildflower meadows? If the soil is too fertile we reduce the fertility by not adding fertiliser and removing fertility by hay cropping or grazing. We use yellow rattle to parasitise the grass and weaken it. Then we introduce seed or plug plants from wildflowers that have been lost from the meadows. Finally we give the wildflowers the chance to spread by sympathetic hay meadow management.

The flower species that we hope to see in our new meadows will include not only copious amounts of yellow rattle but also cowslip, ox-eye daisy, several species of buttercup, knapweed, selfheal, sorrel, vetch, lady’s bedstraw, orchids and the wonderfully named Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon.

You can see our work-in-progress meadows at the Colwall Orchard Group sites at Colwall Village Garden and Lugg’s Mill in Old Church Road, Colwall where you are welcome to walk around the orchards. Jane and my property of Brookmead, also in Old Church Road, now has a new footpath connecting it from the public footpath network adjoining Peattys Cottage to Lugg’s Mill Orchard, and you can see our meadows from either side of that path.

THANK YOU to Derek Rees by Andy Ball

Just a final vote of thanks to Derek Rees for 11 years of creating and distributing the Society’s Newsletter.

That’s a fantastic period of service and a lot of newsletters! THANK YOU Derek!

If anyone reading this feels able to contribute an article for publication in this newsletter that would be wonderful. The Society exists to protect and improve the village environment as well as to research and record village history. On that basis we’d welcome articles on a wide range of subjects to include natural history, the built environment and local history. To get a flavour of what subjects have been written about previously, and to see the general style of writing, back copy issues of the Society’s newsletters are now available to view online at <http://www.cvs.colwall.info/Newsletters.html>. Thanks to Liz Hill for setting this up on the CVS website.

Please feel free to get in touch with more specific details on your ideas; together with queries on the length of, and how to submit an article. I can be contacted by email at the address below.

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email: cvsnewsletter@colwall.info

Colwall Village Society website address: [cvs.colwall.info](http://www.cvs.colwall.info)