

### Colwall Flower Shows and Horticultural Society by David Hodgson and Paul Picton

...concluding the piece started in our last newsletter (April 2021).

Shows were not held during the 1914-1918 War and there were no Colwall Village Shows during World War II. However, the residents in the Wyche and Upper Colwall area organised their first show in 1942. Colwall Village held one more show, six years later, in 1948.



Colwall Flower Show 1948 – Dog Section

An “Annual Flower Show” was organised by the Colwall Allotment and Garden Fertility Association on 24th July 1948. Interestingly, E. Ballard Esq. was the president of the society (he was previously Hon. Secretary for Colwall Show). There were five vice-presidents, ladies living in Colwall, who were noted for their splendid gardens. Miss D. Baird, Miss Binyon, Mrs. K. Bright, Mrs. R. Rowlands and Mrs. Trevor-Jones. They all employed professional gardeners. Ernest Ballard’s son, Philip was the chairman. The Hon. Secretary was S.J. Nipe Esq. The show was held in a meadow belonging to the Horse and Jockey Hotel. The show committee included S. Bowering and W. Steer who were head gardeners at The Elms and Brook House respectively.

A century after the first show, the show of 1948 was the last Colwall Village Show. There could have been many reasons for this. But, one can speculate that Ernest Ballard and other members of his family would have been a main force to keep the shows alive. Ernest became very unwell in 1949 and moved away from his house in Colwall to a cottage in the Herefordshire hamlet of Staplow. His involvement with shows ceased at this time.

However, Margaret (Peggy) Ballard, one of Ernest’s daughters, was a committee member for the Wyche and Upper Colwall Show and a founding member and Secretary of The Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Society. In addition, Marjory Ballard, married to Ernest’s nephew, Ewart, was for many years an active committee member for the same show and society.

The Wyche and Upper Colwall Show first held in 1942 and was not intended to be a replacement for the Colwall Village Show. The owners of The Wyche Stores, on the East side of The Wyche Cutting, W. H. Grundy and his son George, were instrumental in motivating the committee of The Upper Colwall Working Mens Club to organise a “Holidays at Home Show”. This was in part to provide local people with some entertainment in the dark days of wartime and to lighten the darkness of the club room by getting electricity installed with any small profits the show might raise. It should be pointed out that the club room was buried in the depths of the Malvern Hills

beneath the Church of The Good Shepherd. The Hill Infant School was next door to the church and the first schedules for the show were handwritten by the children.

The Wyche and Upper Colwall Show was a popular event and quickly gained much support from the larger village area. Shows in the early 1950's featured displays of plants from one or two of the large gardens in Colwall, who had regained their professional gardeners. In 1960 the show in a church basement was filmed for BBC television.

The show was always held at the end of August. This was largely to take account of the height above sea level of many gardens on the hillside where the plants were at their best later than those in the lower level parts of Colwall. In particular the garden above the Wyche Cutting belonging to the then chairman of the committee, who was adamant that his rambling rose would not be fit to put in the show until the August Bank Holiday.

The organising committee made sure that the show schedules covered the widest possible range of classes appropriate to the season. In addition to flowers, vegetables and fruit there were classes for cookery, handicraft and flower arranging. One class unique to the show was "A Novelty on a Tray". This was a three-dimensional cartoon based on any subject of the exhibitors choice and, often took the form of a comic take on a current item of news. There was a range of special classes for children and these were displayed in the Hill School along with the cookery and handicraft. By the late 1940's the show schedules were being printed by Tilleys of Ledbury. The schedules always included a list of people who had donated money towards the running of the previous years event. By the time of the fourth show the Hill Institute was fully wired for electricity!

Childrens sports were held on the hillside opposite the church. A *Brass Band* was hired to play throughout the afternoon. A *Pig, Ox or Lamb* was roasted to supply visitors with freshly made baps. A Ladies committee made wonderful teas for everyone. For several years a *Fancy Dress competition* was held. There were *Prize Draws* and all sorts of *small sideshows*. At the end of the show many exhibitors donated their entries to be auctioned and this was followed by a *magician or musician* entertaining everyone from the stage in the Hill Institute.

The show judges did not receive any fees or expenses. Instead they were provided with lunch at the nearby Linden Manor Hotel. Some of the show officials accompanied the judges and this eventually generated rather heated arguments about who was allowed to go! In more modern times the judges are able to have their expenses paid and enjoy a light lunch provided by the committee.

Going into the 1950's the show became an extremely popular event and any profits went to making improvements. Success brought its own problems, not least the contentious matter of exhibitors from as far away as Wales taking part in the open section classes. This had to be resolved by running a duplicate set of classes for local exhibitors and, thereby creating problems with the hillside venue being much too small. The only way to overcome this was to move the show down the hill into Colwall Village and this idea was strongly opposed by most of the people from Upper Colwall and the Wyche who had initiated the first shows.



Crowd at the Flower Show at the Hill School, 1955

The deadlock was eventually broken in 1962 when Miss Margaret Ballard (Peggy) and Paul Picton were convinced that there

was now sufficient local interest to persuade the show committee to turn the whole organisation into a gardening club or society to serve the whole area of Colwall.

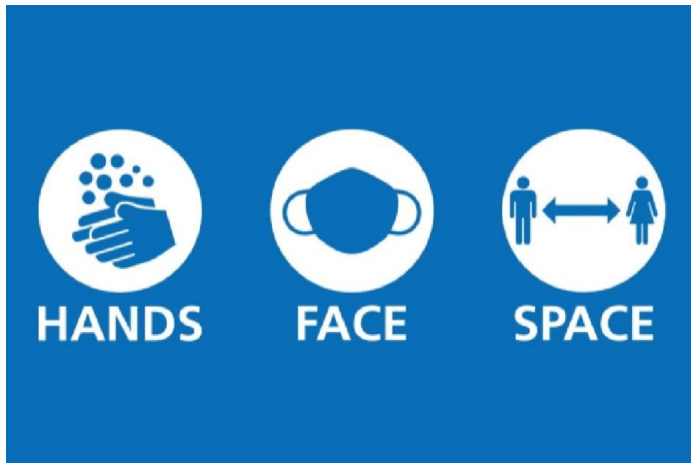
The Upper Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Society was the name adopted by the first committee and a major condition was that the new society would continue to run a village flower show. For several years there was a special sub-committee to run the show which included members who were not on the committee for the Horticultural Society.

Colwall's station-master, Mr. E. W. Tennant was more than just a keen gardener, he ran a small nursery from his home at Chester House and on most days was to be seen pushing a large wheelbarrow full of plants down the road to the station. Colwall Station won many awards for the outstanding floral displays which brightened the forecourt and platforms. Mr. Tennant and his wife organised fund raising whist drives and other events to gain enough money for the new society to hire a marquee. By 1964 sufficient money was available to hold the first August show on a rugby field, now Covent Gardens, in Brockhill Road, Colwall, kindly loaned by The Downs School. Trestle tables for the exhibition and other purposes also had to be hired. Before the show was held the committee adopted the new and current name of The Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Society and the summer show organised by the society is The Wyche and Colwall Show.

The extra space the marquee provided made it much easier to accommodate all the exhibits and to further extend the range of classes. Floral Art had reached its heyday and unheard of numbers of entries created a mass of colour. The playing field itself provided space for a *Dog Show*, *Sports* and a *Five a Side Football competition*, plus a *Tug of War contest*. The *Fancy Dress Parade* still took place, A *Wheelbarrow Race* circumnavigated the village and the *Brass Band* still played on. To aid the smooth running of this much larger show the committee appointed one of their members to be a *show manager*, later called *show secretary*.

Colwall Show was here again. Albeit, without the classes for "Gentlemen" to display their flowers and, with just one entry gate where adult visitors paid more than children.

## **Recording the Present for the Future by Liz Hill**



One of the founding aims of the Colwall Village society was to research and record village history. Over the years we have acquired and gained access to a wealth of historic information about Colwall, but there is very little on the every-day lives of the inhabitants of Colwall. The Covid pandemic has seen one of the biggest sets of social changes in a generation. As I write we do not know whether the worst is over or whether we will have to learn to live with Covid, but I feel that this is the right time to start recording people's memories.

Unfortunately, many of these memories will be sad – the loss of family or friends, the inability to hug a grandchild. There have been the challenges of home schooling and working from home. But perhaps there were some silver linings as well – learning how to zoom with distant relations, how to bake sour dough or dare I say it exercising with Joe Wickes. People in Colwall have come together with the Colwall Coronavirus Careline, The Christmas Advent Calendar and Halloween and Scarecrow trails.

We are setting up a digital archive for future residents to read the testimonies of those involved in the life of Colwall and see how Covid affected every-one's lives. So please help us build up the archive. All of us have been affected in some way by this pandemic. The form of your contribution is up to you. It might be rough notes, a full essay or a photo of the NHS rainbow that you put in your window. Please email your contribution to [cvscovid@colwall.info](mailto:cvscovid@colwall.info) If you tried to email us on this address after the article in the Colwall Clock, please can you resend as we had issues with the forwarding on the email address which have now been fixed.



Data Protection Notice: Initially we will store the information on committee member's computers, but as time permits we aim to put the information on our website if you give us permission.



## Colwall Village Society AGM by Liz Hill

Our April Annual General Meeting had to be cancelled due to the Covid restrictions in place at the time. With that in mind the society has decided that the AGM will be held by correspondence this year.

You will find included with this Newsletter a copy of

- a) The Chairman's Report to the 24th AGM
- b) The Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st March 2021

which you will be asked to vote on as described in the Chairman's covering letter.

The Officers and Committee Members retire at the AGM and are eligible for re-election. The following have indicated their willingness to stand for the year 2021/22, as indicated.

**Chairman:** Liz Hill

**Treasurer:** John Atkin

**Newsletter Editor:** Andy Ball

**Committee Member:** Margaret Matthews

**Archive Co-ordinator:** Susan Bond

**Secretary:** Vacant

The committee has the ability to co-opt members on to the committee at any time of year, and we would welcome any member who would like to join us as it would enable us to do more. Please contact Liz Hill at [cvsmember@colwall.info](mailto:cvsmember@colwall.info) if you would like to find out more about the committee. Due to the current uncertainties surrounding social gatherings, the committee has agreed that members whose subscriptions ended on the 31st March 2020 or on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 will be extended until the 31st March 2022. No further payment is required, but please let Liz Hill know of any changes to your details.

## Wildflowers in Stowe Lane by Elizabeth Whiting



Last year my lockdown walks frequently took me along Stowe Lane, which gave me the chance to have a closer look at the variety of flowers that grow along the railway bank. Some I could name, others I had to consult my wildflower books. So, go for a walk and see if I have named them correctly, or whether you can find more.

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