

Revealing Our Heritage

Newsletter

October 2021

Zoom Session and Talks Winter 21/22

The committee has decided that the time is not yet right to start face-to-face meetings. We have decided instead to arrange some Zoom talks and a teach-in session over the winter. The talks and teach-in session will start at 7:30 p.m. with the virtual “doors” opening at 7:15 p.m., so that you will have time to make sure that your video and sound are all set up. To obtain full details of a Zoom meeting click on the Zoom registration link for the relevant meeting on our website at colwallvillagesociety.org.uk

Monday 22nd November 2021: Talk - Unlocking the History of your House

Inspired by the BBC series “A House Through Time” which follows the history of a house and its occupants, Rhys Griffith from the Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre will look at the main archive sources which can help you to explore the history of your home.

Zoom Registration available from 01/11/21

Monday 27th November 2021: Teach-In Session - Exploring the Colwall Village Society Interactive Map

The Colwall Village Society website has undergone a new layout and now includes an interactive map to look at Colwall in the 1840s and 1880s.



This half hour session with Liz Hill will teach you how to get the best out of the map. It is an interactive session where people are encouraged to try along at the same time as listening. It is therefore limited to 10 people, but the session will be repeated if more are interested.

Zoom Registration available from 01/11/21

January 2022 (24th January 2022): Talk - A Glove Affair

The 1861 census listed 19 glove makers in Colwall. What did they do and why were there none by 1901? David Nash from the Worcestershire Museums Service will give a history of glove making in Worcester and the surrounding areas.

Zoom Registration available from 01/10/22

Searching for the Colwall Oaks – Liz Hill



Wandering around the internet I stumbled across an 1877 drawing by Henry Harris Lines of two large oak trees, which were labelled as “Colwall Oaks”. But where was the drawing done and were they still alive?

Henry Lines was a member of a well-regarded family of Birmingham artists and exhibited works at the Royal Academy. He moved to Worcester in his 30s and became involved in the local Natural History and Archaeological Societies. He spent much of his later years surveying the Malvern Hills, meticulously taking measurements and visually recording the ancient and physical features. This drawing was done when he was 77 years old. The tree on the left is given as having a 16 foot 6 inch girth at 3 feet above ground level, whereas the other is 22 feet in girth at 5 feet above ground level.

Henry Lines was not the only person to have noticed these Oaks in the 19th Century. In 1856 Henry’s school friend Edwin Lees produced a book which included “Incidental Excursions with the Malvern and Worcestershire Naturalists’ Clubs”.

His description of the trees is: “There are some old trees about Colwall that demand attention especially from lovers of nature and sylvan scenery. The most prominent are “the Colwall Oaks”, scraggy and battered veterans, standing in the middle of a large meadow not far from the church. One of these, tempest-torn and half-bare, forms a fine picturesque object, with its bald stag’s horns standing in bold relief against the blue sky. This individual has a bole of some magnitude, measuring nearly twenty-seven feet in circumference; yet not hollow, or only partly so, at the base. These trees stand on ground that constituted anciently a park belonging to the bishops of Hereford, who had a country-seat at Colwall, near the church.”



In 1867, the oaks were again visited, this time by the Woolhope Naturalist's Club in an article on "The Remarkable Trees of Herefordshire", which included this photograph. In addition to the technical details of the tree we get a full description of those on the trip and a description of their day.

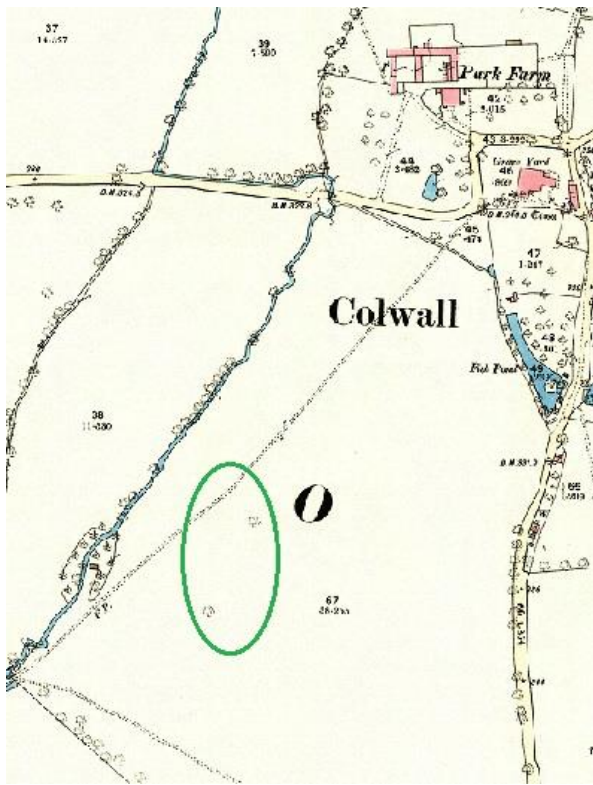
"At 9.45 the Club left Hereford by the Worcester train, and reached Colwall in due course at 10.28. The weather was at this time most unpleasant, dull gray sky with strong wind and driving rain. Umbrellas and Mackintoshes were the order of the day, and the one cheering thing was the mutual surprise of everyone there to see so many others boldly braving the elements in pursuit of science.

From the churchyard the main body proceeded by a farm-house, whose great size, and heavily-timbered walls, and odd windows, give it an appearance of departed greatness, that bears out well the tradition of its having been formerly one of the summer

*palaces of the Bishops of Hereford—on through the farm-yard—on by the muddy remains of the fish-pond—on to the field that still has the name of Colwall Park. In the middle of this field stand the two celebrated Colwall oaks—alone in their glory—the last remnants of the primeval forest of the district. They are very picturesque trees; —they still bear a considerable amount of foliage about their centres but lift up through it their large stag-headed branches, bare and dead, towards the sky; they are of great, but not of extraordinary, size. The largest tree, at 5 feet from the ground, measures 21 feet 7 inches in circumference, but spreads out towards the ground to the circumference of no less than 40 feet 10 inches. This tree is hollow; and as five of the members stood up within it, it was evident that three more could also have done so at the same time. The companion tree, at 5 feet, measures 16 feet 2 inches, spreading out in a similar manner to the circumference of 34 feet on the ground. They are both *Quercus pedunculata*, the so-called old English oak. The very great appearance of age presented by these trees, their picturesque shape and solitary position, well backed as they are by the range of the Malvern Hills, gives them a most interesting character. These trees are probably a thousand years old, and as the Club sheltered behind them from a drifting rainstorm, considerably heavier than a Scotch mist, it was impossible to escape the thought that in their day the noble encampment on the Herefordshire Beacon above them may have been a scene of life and action. When they were saplings, the Saxons had not yet overrun the country."*

* Author's Note: The largest tree is the one in the background of the photo.

So where are these trees and are they still alive nearly 150 years later? The trees are recorded as being in "Colwall Park" which is the large field to the SW of the church. The 1885 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map shows two trees standing on their own in the field. They do not appear in the 1903 or later maps, but do show up in current aerial views.



They are also recorded in the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory where you can see information about all Colwall's veteran trees. This gives the current girth of the tree as 4.75m (15ft 7 in) and 4.5m (14ft 9 in). They can be seen walking along footpath CW22 as shown in this photograph.



A longer version of this article with detailed references can be found on the Colwall Village Society Website.

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