

# Colton History Society



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# A Short History of Colton

Although Colton now appears to be a fairly insignificant small village in the Staffordshire landscape, it has a long and interesting history.

The earliest evidence of habitation in Colton dates from the Bronze Age. Bronze Age 'Burnt Mounds' have recently been found within the Parish boundary and have been researched by Keele University. Burnt mounds are piles of split stones thought to have been split by applying heat, possibly for use in cooking or in the process of curing animal skins to make garments. It is thought that they are evidence of occupation by one of the early British tribes known to be in this area of Staffordshire in the Iron Age period and who built a huge fortification at Castle Ring on Cannock Chase about four miles away. How big the settlement might have been at Colton we have no idea but it could have formed the basis of a village of the future. The earliest written record we have of Colton is in the Domesday Book of 1086.

Colton is recorded as having been held by four Saxon Thaness (Lords) prior to the Conquest by William. It is one of only a small number of Staffordshire villages recorded as having a Priest, which suggests that

in Saxon times the settlement was of significance.

Colton lands were divided between two of William I's Norman supporters who had fought beside him at the Conquest. Part of the village was given to Lord Robert of Stafford and the other part to Earl Roger of Montgomery. Colton would have been a very small proportion of each of their land holdings. The Colton manors were then sub-let to Norman knights who in turn owed their allegiance to those two great Lords.

Colton in the pre- and post-Conquest period must have been one of the largest settlements in the area because it received a Market Charter in 1240, some years before Rugeley. Throughout the Middle Ages it boasted a church, a market, burgage plots, mills and glassworks. Evidence of all but the market can still be seen today.

The remains of the glasswork kilns within the Parish have been found in recent years and have been linked with the local glass working industry known to have been operating around Rugeley and Bagots Park in the middle ages. This local industry is known to have provided glass for prestigious buildings such as York Minster.

The main Manor of Colton was in the possession first of the De-Wasteneys then the Gresley families through the period to the reign of James I. Members of the Gresley family served in the royal courts of some of the English monarchs. During this period Colton was probably a bustling little town. The main occupation for its residents being agriculture, with a busy weekly market.



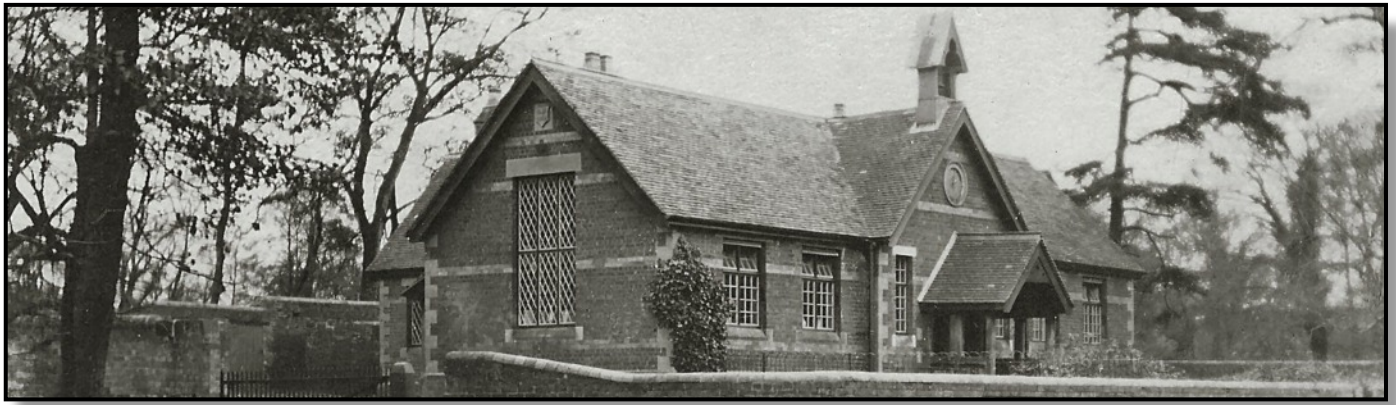
*Sir Walter Aston*

In 1610 Colton Manor was sold to Sir Walter Aston who owned the nearby Tixall Manor. Sir Walter Aston was a man of importance in the court of James I and he was appointed Ambassador to Spain by James. For these services to his King and country, he was created Baron Aston of Forfar. He probably bought Colton Manor because it befitted his position at court. He paid £16,000 (equates to £1.5m in 2006) which in those days was a phenomenal amount of money. The Manor house was reputed to have been a very large timber house with many lodging rooms. A grand house suitable for entertaining many people. We have letters that show that he was often in residence here when he was in the country. Unfortunately there is no surface evidence of this house left but the boundaries of the ancient deer park can still be seen.

The mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century saw a local heiress, Constance Boughey of Boughey Hall Farm marry Sir Thomas Whitgreave of Moseley Old Hall. Sir Thomas was one of the small group of Catholics who had risked their lives by helping the future Charles II escape after his defeat by Cromwell's forces at the Battle of



*An artist's impression of what Colton may have looked like in Saxon times.*



*Colton school circa 1890.*

Worcester. Charles rewarded Thomas for his act of bravery when he came to the throne. With his marriage Thomas then became a significant landowner in Colton and the Whitgreave family remained so until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Boughey Hall Farm is still there today although now it is a group of private barn conversions.

In 1678 Herbert Aston, second son of Lord Aston, achieved notoriety by being implicated along with Viscount Stafford and his elder brother Walter Aston, in the "Popish Plot". They were both Catholics at a time when Catholicism was banned in this country and to practise the faith was illegal. The Popish Plot was supposed to be a Catholic plot to kill the King in order to restore a Catholic monarch. The Plot was reputed to have been partly planned at Herbert Aston's house at Bellamour Hall in Colton. The Plot was eventually proved to be a complete fabrication but not before it had caused a huge outrage in England. Viscount Stafford and Walter Aston along with other sus-

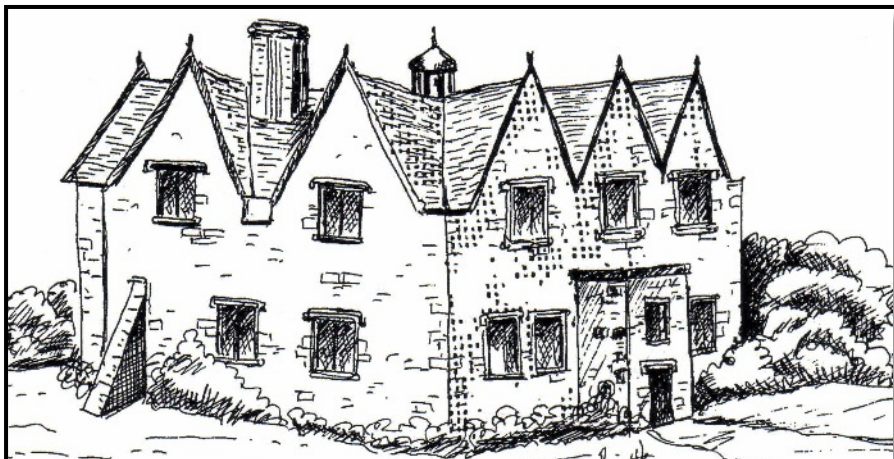
pected plotters were imprisoned in the Tower of London. Circa 1850 remains were found of a building which had probably been a chapel. Nearby human bones were unearthed, possibly a burial ground from ancient times. Also a head carved from stone was found and some other carved stones. We have no written record Viscount Stafford was beheaded for treason but the hoax was exposed before any of the others lost their heads and they were released.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the development of schooling for Colton children. Two small schools were started one around 1764 probably initially for the boys of the village and then in 1818 another one for 20 'poor girls' of the parish. The schools were paid for by local benefactors and a Trust fund. In 1862 the owner of Bellamour Hall, Mr. Horsfall who was M.P. for Liverpool, paid for the building of a new school combining the old schools and for all the children of Colton. The school is still there today.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the building of the canal through Colton. The canal as it went towards Rugeley was the scene of the brutal murder of Christina Collins, a young woman travelling by boat in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This murder became the inspiration for a story in the popular crime series "Morse" starring the late well known actor John Thaw.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw the coming of the railway encouraged, unlike some of his fellow local landlords, by the owner of Bellamour Hall, Mr. Oldham Oldham. He agreed to it passing through his estate and also encouraged the building of a station.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a distinguished photographer, Frederic Bonney, came to live at Colton House. Born in Rugeley he then spent many years in Australia. Whilst there he had taken many photographs of Aborigines and white settlers. These were recognised in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as some of the first pictures ever taken of the life out there and the indigenous people. They now form a valuable collection in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.



*Bellamour Hall, Colton where the Popish Plot was supposed to have been planned.*

#### References.

Colton and the De Wasteneay Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private pub 1897. Records from the Staffordshire Record Office.

#### Acknowledgements.

Text by Gill Sykes. Research Colton History Society. Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

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# History of Christianity in Colton

The exact date of the coming of Christianity to Colton is not known, but two important facts lead us to conclude that this occurred before the Norman Conquest. It is well known that the early Christians sited their places of worship near flowing water. Here at Colton the Church is quite close to the Moreton Brook. Also when the Domesday Survey was compiled in 1086 a priest is recorded amongst those dwelling here.

Some parts of the present building, the tower and the original chancel, now the vestry, are built in local sandstone in the Early English style of architecture. Therefore these parts date from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century or the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

In the vestry are three sedilia (seats recessed into the wall) and an ancient piscina (niche containing a stone bowl and drain on the wall used by the priest to wash his hands and the sacred vessels after the sacrament, the contents draining to the consecrated land outside) are probably



*The piscina found in the present chancel.*

from this period. It should be noted that the floor is now at a higher level. The doorway into the vestry appears to be original and nearby is a 'squint' or 'leper' window. Possibly this is

thought to date back to the original building of the church.

The Tower contains three lancet windows, one of which has three pieces of medieval glass still in situ. Colton was one of the last sites where glass was produced in Staffordshire in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and it is possible that this glass was manufactured in the parish. If you face the church on the south side you can see the ancient preaching cross between the tower and the porch.

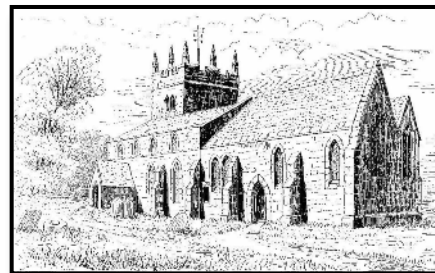


*St. Mary's church Colton after restoration in 1851. Unchanged externally today.*

where the 'unclean' would have listened to the celebration of Mass and could have witnessed the elevation of the Host.

Late 14<sup>th</sup> Century frescoes were discovered beneath plaster when restoration work was being undertaken in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These were painted on the south wall of the original chancel, now the vestry. They depicted the story of St. Nicholas, the salutation of Elizabeth and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. It was not possible to save them at that time but drawings were made before they were removed. The bases of the pillars dividing the vestry from the present chancel are also

The church has undergone various alterations throughout the centuries. Buttresses were added to the tower and the south wall. The north aisle was taken down and a gallery for

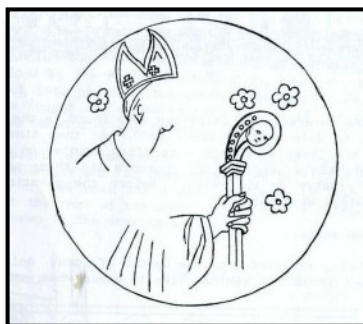


*Artist impression of St. Mary's before 1851. Colton and the De Wasteney's*

singers was added. Also at the same time a clerestory was added as depicted in this line drawing, circa 1840.

In 1849 the Rev. Abdiel Seaton became rector at a time when it was obvious the church was in need of a complete restoration.

The Rector, his wife and Miss Ellen Oldham of Bellamour Lodge were the chief financiers of this major project.



*Line drawing of fresco. From Colton and the DeWasteney's.*



Miss Ellen Oldham is remembered as Colton's greatest benefactress and as such 'bird gates' were erected in her memory in the church porch by the Parishioners.

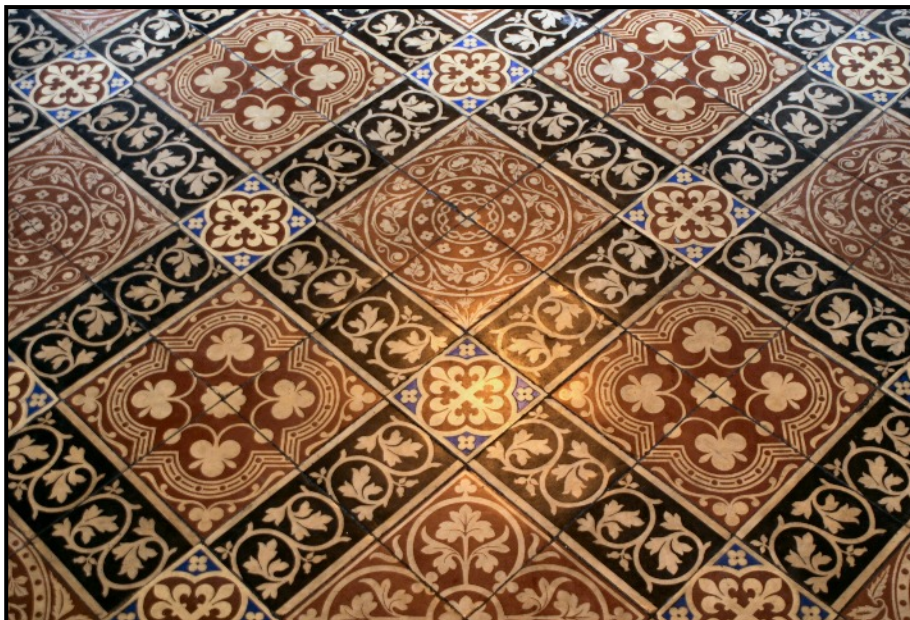
They employed George Edmund Street, an eminent Victorian church architect, to undertake the work. The whole church was rebuilt with the exception of the tower and the south eastern section, which had until then been the chancel. A new chancel was created with Street designing the altar rails, the choir stalls, the stone screens with metal gates, the pulpit, the font and the communion vessels. The communion vessels are currently in The Victoria and Albert Museum, London. He used the



*Looking from the Nave into the Chancel.*

*The Minton floor tiles  
below & below right*

from 1704. The last two were donated at the millennium.



Colton is fortunate to have parish records going back to 1647 and these can be viewed on microfiche at the County Record Office in Stafford.

Early English style of architecture for the pillars and the window openings. The whole of the chancel and sanctuary floors was tiled with Minton tiles of the period, those in the 'altar place' being donated by Herbert Minton.



At this time an organ was installed and the Rev. Seaton purchased three medieval Misericords, (tilting seats that a priest could use during the service) these were placed in the sanctuary. The carving on one of these is thought to be unique as it portrays the Roman god Janus. The majority of the windows in the church also date from this time.

Since 1851 the building has remained unchanged externally, although there have been a few changes within it. Many memorial gifts have been donated through the years.

There is a peal of six bells hanging in the tower, the oldest one dating

When excavations for the building of Bellamour Lodge were made circa 1850, remains were found of a building which had probably been a chapel. Nearby human bones were unearthed, possibly a burial ground from ancient times. Also a head carved from stone was found and some other carved stones. We have no written record of this build-



ing. However the field names in the vicinity give clues to there being a chapel on this site. One field is called Chapel Yard and another is Chapel Yard Meadow, whilst another is Chapel Hill.

There was also a Methodist chapel built in 1838, principally but not solely at the expense of Miss Elizabeth Birch of Brereton, who had family links to Colton. This was in order “to bring light to the benighted of the village”; it was situated on the left hand side and halfway up High Street. It is now a private house.

#### References.

Colton and the DeWastenev Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private publication. 1897.

#### Acknowledgements.

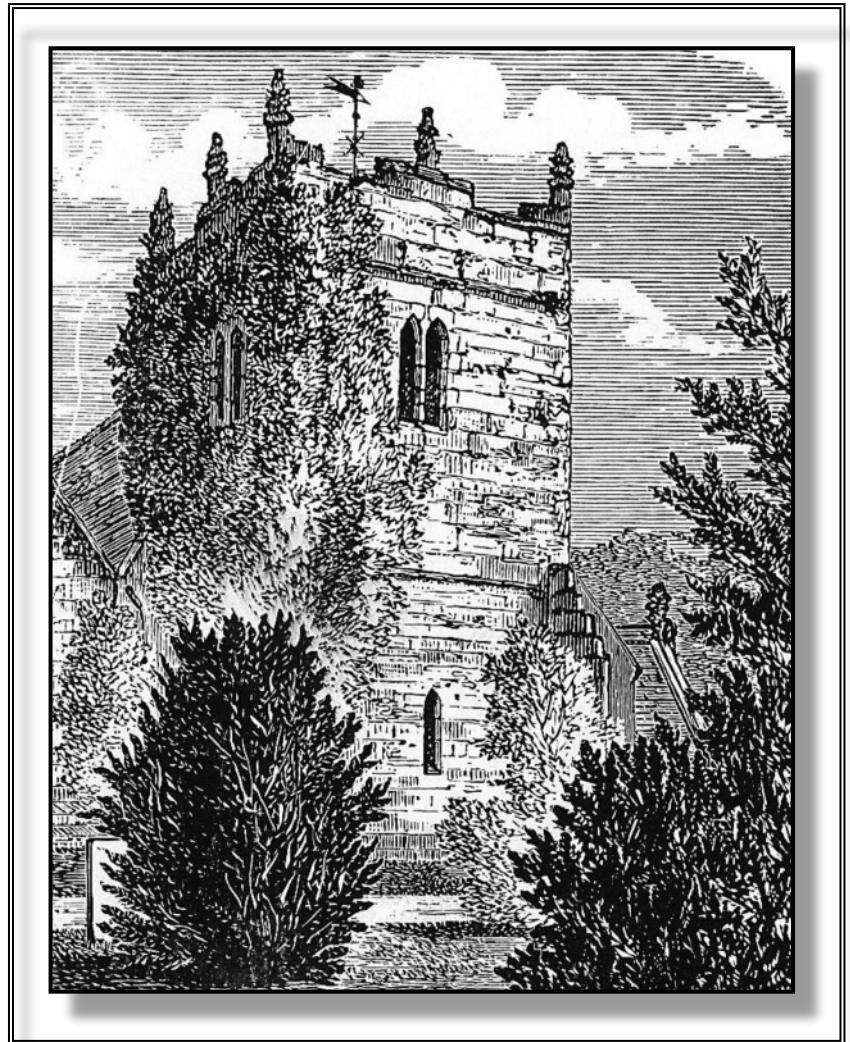
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Further research and compilation by members of Colton History Society.  
Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

#### Pictures.

Colton and the DeWastenev Family by Rev. F. Parker.  
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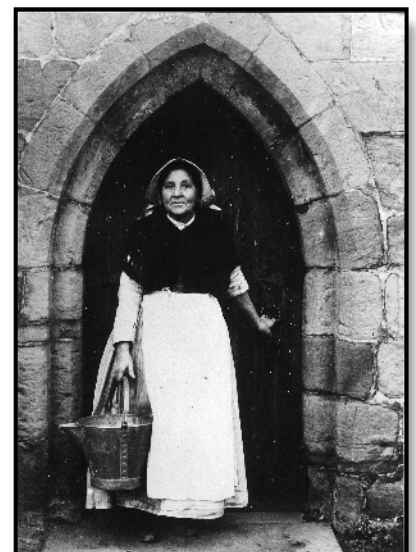
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The Church Tower  
depicted in Colon and the De Wastney Family



*St Mary's Church from Castle Croft*



*Mrs Bentley on cleaning duty*

# Colton's Charitable Trusts

Many of Colton's Charitable Trusts have been in existence for centuries, one of them being of such ancient origin that the date of its formation is unknown. This pamphlet describes the charities some of which are identified as Parochial whilst others are Ecclesiastical Charities.

## The Parochial Charities

For the benefit of the needy in the parish.

### The Thomas Russell Charity, 1589

Thomas Russell was a draper in the City of London and by his will left 52/- for ever to buy 12 pennyworth of bread each Sunday for the poor of Colton. (Also at Blithfield and Barton under Needwood where he founded a school in 1593). This rent charge was on his land in Armitage. This rent charge is now redeemed\*.

### The Thomas Taylor Charity, 1676

Thomas Taylor, a yeoman of Colton, left by his will 52/- yearly for ever to buy 12 penny worth of bread each Sunday for the poor of Colton. This rent charge, now redeemed, was on his land known as Tinkers Close in Colton.

### The Thomas Butler Charity, 1680

Thomas Butler was a blacksmith in Colton. He left 54/- yearly for ever to buy cloth or other conveniences for the poor at the discretion of the Parish Priest and Overseers. The rent charge, which is now redeemed, was on his land called Crabtree Flat. In the 19th Century records show that the money bought two coats for old men and four dresses for old women of the Parish.

### The John Webb Charity, 1727

John Webb of Wiggington (near Tamworth) left in 1729, 20/- to be

A TABLE of the several Charity's left to this Parish	
Thomas Russell, of the City of London, by Will, dated July 7 <sup>th</sup> 1589, Left 52 <sup>/-</sup> yearly for ever to buy 12 <sup>/-</sup> in Bread, for every Sunday, in the year, to be Given to the Poor: Charged upon his Estate at <i>Morethurn</i> , in the Parish of <i>Hermitage</i> .	
Thomas Taylor of Colton, by Will, dated May 19 <sup>th</sup> 1676, Left 52 <sup>/-</sup> Yearly for ever, to be given by 12 <sup>/-</sup> every Sunday to the Poor: Charged upon a piece of Land in this Parish, called <i>Tinkers-close</i> .	
Thomas Butler of Colton, by Will, dated July 30 <sup>th</sup> 1680, Left 54 <sup>/-</sup> Yearly for ever to buy cloth and other Conveniences for the Poor, at the Discretion of the Minister & Overseers: Charged upon a piece of Land in this Parish called upper Crab-tree Flat.	
John Webb of Wiggington by Will, Left 20 <sup>/-</sup> to be Given to the Poor, on every St. Thomas's day yearly for ever, Charged on his House in Colton (now known by the Name of the <i>Three Wheels</i> ) and the little Croft Adjoyning; situate betwixt the House, belonging to the Clerk, of this Church, and the Freehold House of M <sup>r</sup> Power a miner.	
A Message w <sup>th</sup> Lands thereto belonging value of y <sup>e</sup> whole about 4 <sup>/-</sup> per Annum: was left to y <sup>e</sup> Parish Clerk of this Church for ever by some very Ancient and unknown Benefactor	
The Rev <sup>d</sup> M <sup>r</sup> John Taylor Rector	{ Jos <sup>t</sup> Evans Benj <sup>t</sup> Toob } Churchwardens 1731

This table now in the tower of the church records these ancient parochial trusts.

given to the poor every St. Thomas's Day. It was charged upon his house known as the Three Wheels Inn and the croft adjoining. This property by 1801 paid for a school (see Colton United Schools Charity). In 1884 it was leased to the Elizabeth Harland Almshouse Charity for 99 years (see following notes).

### The Colton Parish Lands Trust, 1792

This was formed following a private Act of Parliament. Lady Mary Blount, widow and lady of the Manor of Colton, joined with 18 other land-

owners to enclose land in Colton. The commonfields - the Eye Meadow and the Sleetings - that had been for use by all villagers were sold and moved into private ownership. There was provision for road repairing, making of new roads, planting trees and hedges. The money from the sale was used to build six parish almshouses at Stockwell Heath that became known as 'The Barracks'. They were demolished in the 1960's.

Other parcels of land and some cottages were retained and rented out, the profits being used for the relief of the poor of Colton. The money also had to maintain some roadways, hedges, ditches and fences. Two marl holes were retained, the marl being used to dress the fields. These cottages have now been demolished and two others built. Today the Trustees make donations



The Barracks at the turn of the C19<sup>th</sup>.



each year to individuals and organisations within the parish. Their first charge is to keep their properties and land in good order.

### Colwich Parochial Charities.

Why Colwich Charities in Colton? Since ancient times there have been parts of Colwich within Colton Parish. It is assumed that this predates parish boundaries. A possible explanation is that some people migrating from the adjacent Episcopal Manor of Haywood wished to maintain their allegiance to Haywood Manor. There are 90 acres of Colton so designated around the parish. The oldest of these charities is that of Thomas Crompton of Moreton who in 1659 bequeathed land at Ravenhill in Rugeley to provide funds for the poor. His grandson by marriage also left £50 to this trust in 1706. One person from the Parish represents Colton on this Trust.

### The Ecclesiastical Charities

**M**oneys used for the benefit of those named, either for attendance at services or for undertaking duties at the church.

### The Colton United Schools Charity

**T**his was created in 1862 with the building of the present school on land given by T.B.Horsfall M.P. owner of Bellamour Hall. Before this date the boys and girls of the village had been educated separately.

**T**he Free School for boys was founded and endowed in 1764 from subscriptions and levies. The sum of £350 purchased the school, some land and some woodland at Marchington. The rents from the land together with £2 from the Mary Taylor Charity formed the salary of the master who lived at the school.

**I**n 1821 John Spencer left £500 on behalf of his brother Francis for this school. The Free School for girls was endowed in 1801 by Thomas Webb. His properties were The Three Wheels Inn (later



*The school of 1764 in Colton*

the Bell Inn) inherited from his forebear John Webb, three cottages known as Webb's Cottages (now demolished) and a field in Colton. This paid for a mistress to teach 20 girls to read, knit and sew.

**I**n 1862 Mr. Horsfall consolidated these two charities together into one to help finance the new school for the village. The school is still run partly by the trust using income derived from the sale of the properties. Only the land at Marchington remains.

### The Parish Clerk's Charity.

**T**his was set up hundreds of years ago and may have been connected with the ancient chapel that once stood in the grounds of Bellamour Lodge. It was certainly in existence in medieval times as some of the land owned by this charity was in strip or dole formation. This land was sold in 1965.

**T**he rents of the land paid for the Parish Clerk's income and there was a house where he lived. He undertook many duties for the church and this was a very important position in the parish for many centuries. This ceased during the 1960's and the Charity recently sold Clerk's House.



*Town clerk's house in 1992*

### The Mrs. Mary Taylor Charity

**D**aughter of a Rector of Colton, she left £25 in her will of 1755 to buy a parcel of land. The rent from the land was to pay £1 "to one or several" who attended both morning and evening worship on Good Friday. £2 per annum was to be paid to help with the running of the Free School. The Good Friday 'dole' ceased in the 1930's. The rent charge is now redeemed.

### The Elizabeth Harland Charity

**I**n 1884 Mrs Elizabeth Harland built, in memory of her sister, Ellen Oldham, 8 almshouses. She leased the Three Wheels Inn from the United Schools Charity for 99 years. She demolished the inn and built the present day Oldhams Cottages for the elderly of the Parish. In 1965 the

property was separated from the School Charity.

**Redeemed** - In the 1980s, the owners of lands, originally designated for charitable purposes, were charged a sum of 12 times the original annual rent charge for the particular charity. This money was then invested bringing in a small amount of income annually for the Charity. So the original rent charges are no longer paid.

**Acknowledgements.**

Research and text by Dorothy Bradbury who is indebted to her father's records.

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**Pictures.**

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**COLTON PARISH, 1845 A.D.**

Parish Map as drawn the Rev Parker and included in his book  
'Colton and the De Wastneys'



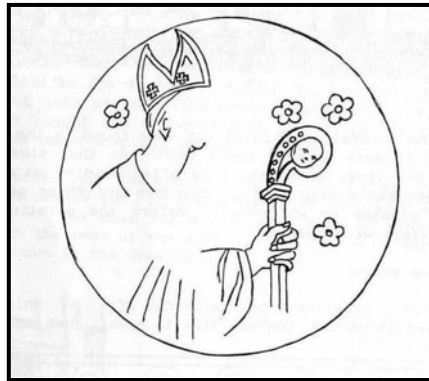
# Persecution of the Catholics

Following the Reformation when Henry VIII broke from Rome and became supreme head of the Church in England instead of the Pope, religious practice in this country was thrown into turmoil. The king closed monasteries and confiscated their land and treasures. These seizures affected Colton farms. The Lount and The Grange (later known as Boughey Hall Farm) belonging to St Thomas's Priory in Stafford, were seized by Henry and given away as a gift to one of his supporters.

Churches were forced to stop many of their Catholic rituals and Colton Church was no exception. This state of affairs continued in the short reign of Edward VI when he pushed through further huge changes in the religious practices of the population and many church possessions of value were seized by the Crown. Upon Edward's early death in 1553 the whole process was reversed by a complete restoration of the Catholic faith under his sister Mary Tudor. Her short and 'bloody' reign, when many Protestants were burnt at the stake; was followed upon Mary's death by Elizabeth I restoring all the changes that her father and brother had begun.

Again Colton Church was affected. All the valuables still in their possession with any Catholic significance had to be declared and were seized. Any pictures on the interior church walls having any connections with the Cult of the Saints had to be painted out.

Pictures on the walls of Colton church disappeared under white-wash until they were found again in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century



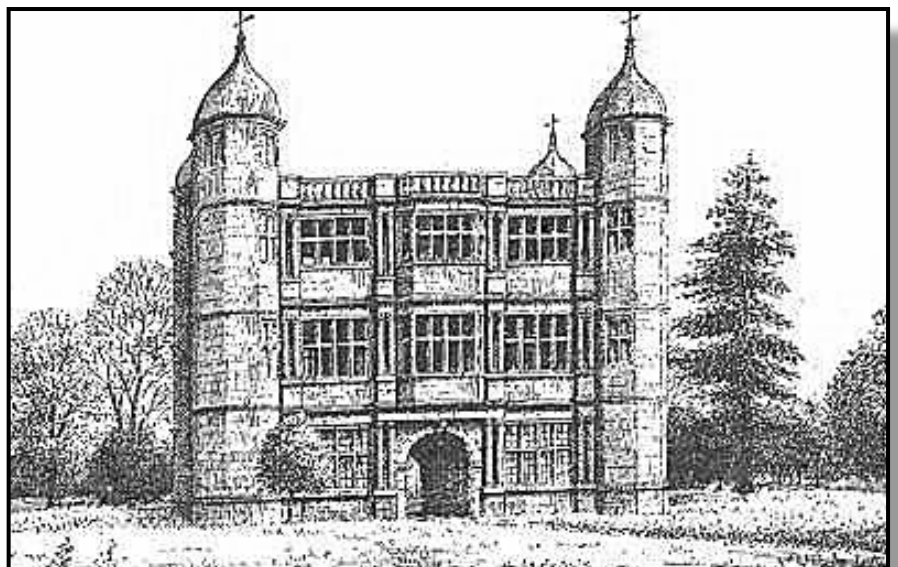
*The picture of St Nicholas that was painted over inside St Mary's Church Colton*

From then on the Catholic Church was, in effect, driven underground and those who remained faithful to Rome endured more and more persecution as time went on. Despite this, over the next two and a half centuries, many Staffordshire families stayed loyal to the Catholic faith, practising it in secret. They often became embroiled in plots attempting to reinstate Roman Catholicism as the faith of the nation. Some residents of Colton were connected at various times to such events and plots.

The faith of the monarch dictated the faith of the nation. This led to a number of attempts by Catholics to remove the monarch and replace him or her with a practising Catholic mon-

arch. Elizabeth I was soon threatened in such a manner. The major threat by Catholics to her rule were their attempts to replace her by her Catholic cousin Mary Queen of Scots who also had a claim to the English throne. Some of this plotting took place in Staffordshire not too far away from Colton.

Elizabeth always perceived her cousin to be a threat and when Mary took refuge in England after her disastrous reign in Scotland, Elizabeth held her captive until she decided what to do with her. Mary soon became a focus for Catholic hopes. Elizabeth was well aware of this and moved Mary around the country to try and avoid any plots succeeding. Mary was eventually moved to Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire. Tutbury was an unhealthy place and she complained. They decided to move her for a while to Chartley Hall. Local legend says that she came via Abbots Bromley passing through Colton. It was whilst she was at Chartley Hall that the Babington Plot, the plot that finally sealed her fate, was hatched. When this plot was discovered in 1586 she was held under close arrest by Sir



*The Gatehouse to Tixall Hall through which Mary Queen of Scots rode to her imprisonment by Sir Walter Aston*

Walter Aston at his house in Tixall, just four miles from Colton.

From Tixall Hall she moved to Fotheringay Castle and beheaded there in 1587. Mary was moved away from Staffordshire because it was considered to be a county full of Catholics who would still be willing to help her. The Catholics of Staffordshire were described with scorn as "Rome's snaky brood roosted and rested themselves more warmer and safer than in any other part of this kingdom" (Richard Lee 1624). Places around Staffordshire where Catholic families lived included Chillington, Boscobel, Saredon, Moseley, Brewood, Horsley, Knightley, Kings Bromley, Hamstall Ridware, Hoar Cross, Wolseley, Gerrard's Bromley, Stafford Castle and Sandon to name but a few. Many of the landed families who lived in these places were to play a significant part in events in the next few decades.

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 created a great fear of Catholics. Jesuit Priests ministered to them in secret assuming aliases so that they could hide with families who were wealthy enough and brave enough to support them. Hiding holes known as Priest holes were constructed in these houses so that the priest could hide if the house was searched whilst he was celebrating Mass, knowing that if found he would face execution and the family be imprisoned.

Walter Aston, grandson of the Sir Walter Aston of Tixall who had been Mary's gaoler bought the Manor of Colton in 1610 to add to his Tixall Estates. Walter had converted to Catholicism whilst acting as Ambassador to Spain for James I and his family followed his example. In 1638 his son Herbert built a secret chapel as part of his new house at Bellamour in Colton so that he and his family and employees could practise their faith in secret.

Constance Boughey who owned Boughey Hall Farm in Colton was also a Catholic. After the death of her first husband she married a very important Catholic - Sir Thomas Whitgreave of Moseley Old Hall, near Wolverhampton. Thomas had hidden Charles II in the priest hole at Moseley Old Hall, when he fled after being defeated at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. When they had gone Thomas helped Charles to move on to another safe Catholic house and then on to safety in France



*Moseley Old Hall*

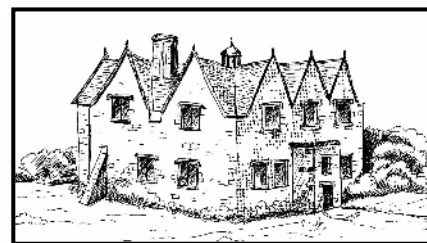
Constance Boughey went to live with her new husband at his house taking her young son by her first marriage with her. Such was the antagonism towards Catholics in this period that her former father in law took her to court for the custody of her son on the grounds that she was bringing him up in the Catholic faith. She lost her custody battle and tragically had to give up her son.

Much was blamed on the Catholics and it is therefore not surprising that yet another 'supposed plot' was exposed. This one, the 'Popish Plot' of 1679, was supposed to have been partly plotted at the home of Herbert Aston - Bellamour Hall in Colton.

Lord Stafford, Lord Aston, Herbert Aston and others were accused by a man called Titus Oates of plotting to kill the King. Lord Stafford was executed before the plot was revealed to be a complete hoax and the other prisoners released from where they had been held in the Tower of London.

Persecution continued for the family at Bellamour in the form of fines and sequestration of land until finally by the Act of Emancipa-

tion in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century Catholics were allowed to practise their faith with freedom.



*Bellamour Hall, Colton*

#### References.

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#### Pictures.

Picture of Old Moseley Hall by courtesy of The National Trust. Colton History Society collection.

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# The History of Education in Colton



*School Cottages. The first school in Colton. Known as 'The Endowed School'*

The first school documented in Colton known as "The Endowed School" opened its doors in 1765. A parochial levy had raised the sum of £350 to purchase a schoolroom and school-master's house to educate poor children of the parish. The sum raised also purchased land in Colton and Uttoxeter to provide income from the rent. The children were to be taught to "read, write, to keep accounts and to 'know their Church of England Catechism'". The head teacher had to accompany the children to church on a Sunday. The school received a financial boost in 1821 from Francis Spencer who left in his will interest on £500 to provide it with income.

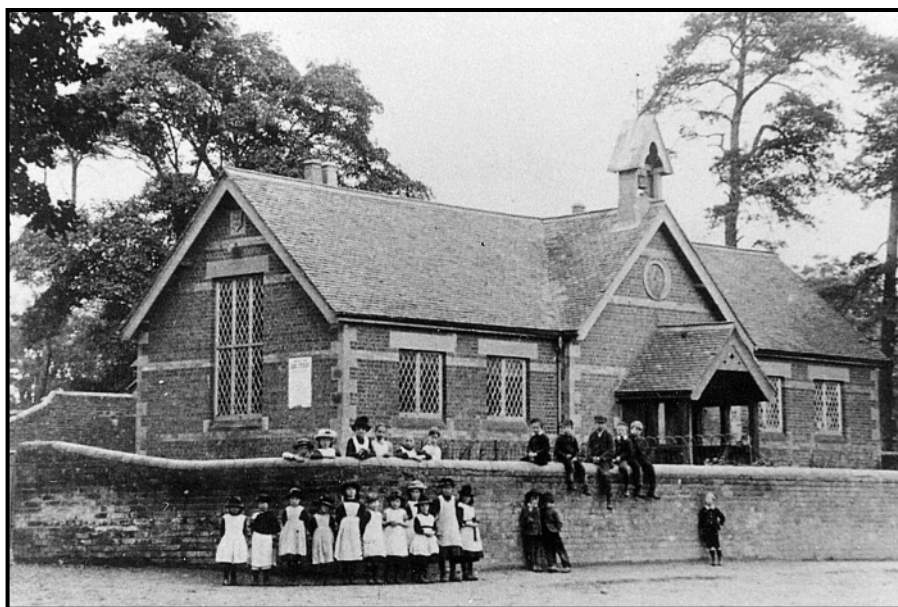
It was not compulsory at this time that children went to school. Those who attended were provided with free quills, ink and books.

The second school known as the "Webb School" began in 1818. The combined wills of two local benefactors Thomas and John Webb, left a Trust fund comprising of the rental from three cottages known as Webb's Cottages, some gardens, a small piece of land and the Three Wheels Inn. This was to provide money for the running costs of a school to educate "20 poor girls of the parish". They were to be taught to read, write sew and knit.

Local collective memory suggests that the school was first held in one of the Webb's cottages and then later moved into one of the buildings adjoining the first rectory where the new rectory now stands.

There was briefly a private school for 11 boys boarding at Colton House in the 1850's run by a Mr. Richard Mills and possibly around the same time another small school for girls run from Bellamour Hall by Miss Oldham.

In the 1850's the Endowed School and the Webb School began to work more closely together and eventually it was decided to amalgamate the two and build a new school for all of the children. Thomas Berry Horsfall, the Lord of the Manor of Colton, donated land and money to build this new school. Colton United School opened its doors in 1863 with the income now coming from the rental of School Cottages, (the former Endowed School), the land in Uttoxeter and the Webb Trust.



*Colton United School. (Photo by Frederic Bonney)*

The new school consisted of one large classroom divided in two, one side for the boys the other for the girls and also a north classroom for the infants.

When the new school opened the Trustees set a scale of weekly payments for the pupils of 2d. for the first child and 1d. for each additional child. This was increased in 1874 to 3d for the first child, 2d for the second and 1d for any others. Some children whose parents could not afford to pay were paid for by local benefactors.

The headmaster was required to live in the village and a school house was built for him and his family to rent, which can still be seen on Bellamour Way. The school has seen 15 heads to date; ten men and five women. The longest serving was Mr Broughton between 1923 and 1959.

In 1862 the curriculum was set by the trustees to include "reading, writing, spelling, grammar, history, geography, such subjects as useful or industrial



*Elm Cottage. The house for the head-master until the 1960's when it was sold.*

knowledge including needlework and knitting to be taught to the girls, also religious knowledge ..." Church inspectors frequently inspected the school and the reports varied but Religious Education was always reported as being very good!

In the early 1900's gardening became an important feature of the curriculum, and there are still residents in Colton today who can remember tending the vegetables in the school garden as one of their lessons!

The school log books which exist from 1862 onwards give us a great insight into the organisation of the school and who was responsible for it. They record information on the curriculum, the heads and the teachers, the children, changes to the building and how external events affected the school in all sorts of ways.

One important matter recorded frequently was attendance. Attendance did not become compulsory until 1880. For a long time the pay of the head and his staff depended partly on the number of children attending and therefore the head was always anxious to encourage children to come to school. The children in the early days were often away from school for a variety of reasons.

The school log books provide us with the reasons. Illness such as measles often closed the school com-

pletely for two or three weeks at a time. Collecting of different harvests often required the children to help and kept them away from their studies. The First World War saw a number of boys leaving early to work in the fields because many of the farm hands had gone to fight. The weather also caused absences. Deep snow and floods frequently closed the school in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1930 it was decided to re-organise schooling for the 11 to 14 year olds on a local level. Those children who did not win a scholarship place to the local grammar schools were now going to go to Colwich School. This school was designated as a central school for the children from the Blithfield, Great Hayward, Hixon and Colton village schools for the senior part of their education.

As for those children who passed a scholarship entrance exam for grammar school and whose parents could afford to send them, the boys went to Rugeley Grammar School and the girls went to Stafford Girls High School.

The Second World War brought 68 evacuees from Westgate on Sea on the south coast to Colton and the Ridges. Most of them attended St. Mary's school along with the local children.

In 1954 the school became granted by the Lichfield Diocese. During the 1960's the name became St. Mary's. A major modernisation of the school took place in 1966. During the period of alterations the whole school went temporarily to Colwich school until the modernised Colton school reopened in 1966. The school we have today is a consequence of this modernisation and a few additions that have been completed in recent years. It still serves the local community, continuing the education of Colton children within the village for almost 250 years.

#### References.

The School Log Books, The Governors Minute Book and The School Trust Book & Papers, St Mary's School, Colton.  
Census Records, Staffordshire Record Office.

#### Acknowledgements.

Mrs. Lavender, Head Teacher, The Governors and The Trustees at St. Mary's School, Colton.  
Research members of the Colton History Society, in particular Gill Croft, Ann Shortland, Dorothy Bradbury and Gill Sykes.  
Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

#### Pictures

The Parr Family.  
Colton History Society collection.

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*St Mary's School children in 1894 with no recorded absence in that year*

# Some Notable People of Colton

Colton is a small Staffordshire village with a history dating back before the Norman Conquest. Throughout the centuries there have been a number of notable people who have lived in Colton.

## The De Wastenev Family

The earliest spelling of the name "de Gastiney" denotes that this family probably came from a district called Gastinois which lay south of Paris.



*De Wastney family Coat of Arms*

They were followers of Robert de Stafford. The first written reference to them occurred in 1166 in the reign of Henry II when the Roll of Exchequer states that a Geoffrey de Wastenev held a Water Mill and a Manor in Colton. They built the first Colton Hall on high ground above the village, the site of the present day Colton Hall Farm. In 1240 Henry III granted the de Wasteneys the right to hold a weekly market in Colton each Friday. In 1364 Thomasine de Wastenev, a successor of Geoffrey married Nicholas Gresley and took by this marriage the Colton Manor into the Gresley Family.

## Nicholas De Colton

In 1270, during a brawl Adam Hereward was stabbed by Nicholas De

Colton who took sanctuary in Colton Church. The villagers tried to keep him in the church to secure his arrest, but this was thwarted by Ralph de Burgh who prompted by William le Jovene of the Mavesyn family, lords of the Manor of Little Hay, connived in his escape. A fine of 100 shillings was enforced by the sheriff on the inhabitants of Colton for letting him escape.

The following year in 1271 John the chaplain of Colton, who probably served the chapel which stood near to where Bellamour Lodge was later built, killed Christina wife of Nicholas de Colton whilst interposing between him and a stranger residing at her house, striking her in the stomach with a knife, although the blow was really intended for her guest. John fled from justice and was outlawed, his goods being confiscated. Judgment for murder was given.

## The Bagot Family

They owned Little Hay Manor which was one of three manors in Colton. The Bagots are a well known local gentry family who still live at nearby Blithfield Hall.

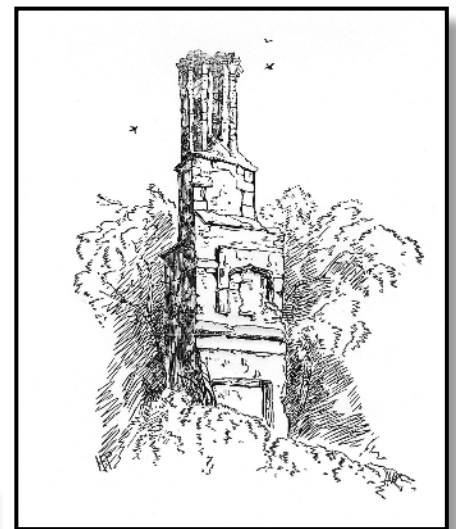


*Bagot family Coat of Arms*

A Blithfield deed of 1322 shows that Robert, Lord of Little Hay, sold the manor to Richard de Blithfield and his wife Cecilia. The new owners retained possession of the manor until Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Richard de Blithfield mar-

ried Sir Ralph Bagot, of Bagots Bromley. During Elizabeth I's reign Anthony Bagot, a courtier and one of the chief followers of the ill-fated Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was owner of Little Hay Manor. In his will Anthony left several bequests to his servants at Little Hay and also money to the poor of Colton. The Manor Court, the body which settled all local disputes, was always held at Little Hay Manor.

The old Manor House which was probably half-timbered was taken down in 1846. However, on the orders of Lord Bagot the original Tudor chimneys were to be left standing in the garden where they remain today.



*Little Hay Chimney*

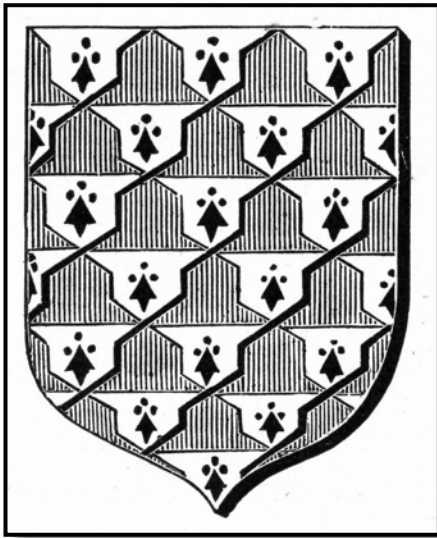
## The Gresley Family

Around 1365 Sir Nicholas Gresley acquired Colton Manor through marriage to Thomasine DeWastenev, heiress to the DeWastenev estates. The Gresley ancestors all made notable names for themselves through court, parliament and very successful marriages.

Thomasine and Nicholas Gresley had a son Sir Thomas Gresley. He represented both Staffordshire and Derbyshire in parliament. In 1439 he was High Sheriff of Staffordshire.



In 1415 Sir Thomas and his son John served in Henry V's army at Agincourt. Sir Thomas also had two daughters. One, Joan, was a nurse to young Henry VI and his other daughter Margaret married Sir John Blount.



*Gresley family Coat of Arms*

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century a later Sir Thomas married Anne Ferrers of Tamworth Castle.

William the eldest son served under Henry VIII. However, William died without issue, leaving the second eldest son his brother George to take possession of the estates. George was created Knight of Bath at Anne Boleyn's coronation. George died in 1548. George's son Sir William married Catherine, daughter of Sir Edward Aston of Tixall. They had a son Sir Thomas who met and welcomed King James VI of Scotland on his way from Scotland to take possession of the English crown. He was knighted at Worksop on April 20<sup>th</sup> 1603.

Sir Thomas and his son George sold Colton Hall and all their lands in 1610 to their relative Sir Walter Aston of Tixall.

#### The Aston Family

Sir Walter Aston's family owned the Tixall estate. Sir Walter inherited the estate from his father Sir Edward Aston, at the age of seventeen. Sir Walter bought Colton Manor in

1610 for the vast amount of £16,000 (which equates to 1.5m in 2006).

Sir Walter rose quickly into favour at the court of James I and he was created a Knight of the Bath when the King's eldest son Henry was proclaimed Prince of Wales. He was made a baronet in 1611.

A few years later he became a gentleman of the Privy Chamber. In 1619 he was sent as Ambassador to Spain to negotiate the marriage of Prince Charles. The heavy expenses he incurred as ambassador were never sufficiently repaid by the King. In 1622 he was compelled to sell part of his estate.



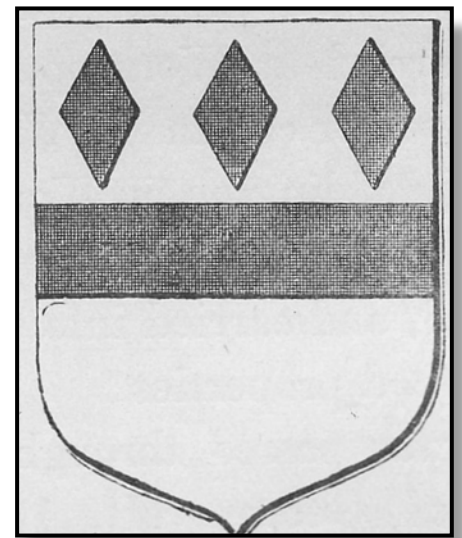
*Sir Walter Aston*

After six years abroad he returned to England. As part recompense for his service as ambassador Charles I made him Lord Aston of Forfar. In 1635 he was again sent to Spain as ambassador where he stood in high favour with the Spanish king Philip IV. Due to ill health he returned from Spain in 1638 and died in 1639, leaving his heir Walter who fought in the memorable defence of Lichfield in 1646. His sons Walter, Herbert, and John and three daughters survived him. Herbert was his father's secretary. Upon Herbert's marriage to Catherine Thimbelby, his father made over to him a small piece of land in Colton and in 1638 Herbert built a house named "Bellamore"; so called because it was finished by be-

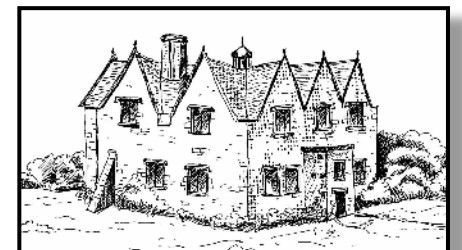
nevolence of his friends and for the love of his wife. Through the years the spelling has become Bellamour.

The Astons at this time were recusants (Catholics), they were heavily fined, which caused them great distress. In 1678 Herbert Aston was implicated in the Titus Oates plot but was exonerated when it was found to be a hoax. Herbert died in 1689. His son John inherited the "Bellamour" estate but died without heirs and it reverted to the main Aston family of Tixall.

In 1751 Mary Aston daughter of Lord Aston inherited from her father the Manor of Colton and carried it by marriage into the Blount family. The old Colton Hall was destroyed by fire in the latter part of Charles I's reign i.e. before 1649, allegedly due to the carelessness of a servant.



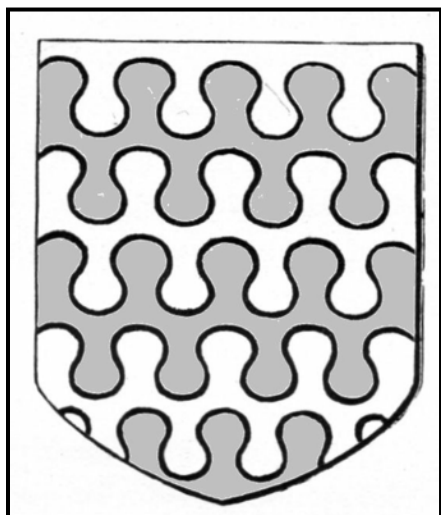
*Aston family Coat of Arms*



*The first Bellamour Hall*

#### The Blount Family

Lady Mary Aston married Sir Walter Blount, 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet, in 1766. Their third son Edward inherited the Colton estate.



*Blount family Coat of Arms*

Lady Mary was instrumental in obtaining the Private Act of Parliament for the enclosure of the Commons and Wastes in the parish. In 1792 Lady Mary made Bellamour her home after she was widowed. She built a second, bigger Bellamour Hall around 1795.

She died in 1805 whilst staying at the home of her youngest son at Basford in Staffordshire, when a spark from the fire fell onto her dress.



*Lady Mary Blount*

Her son Edward Blount lived at the new Bellamour Hall. He was an ardent supporter of the Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829. He sold his Colton estate in 1824.



*Second Bellamour Hall*

### **The Boughey and Whitgreave Families.**

In 1563 Sampson Boughey, a yeoman farmer from Audley, bought Boughey Hall Farm. This was handed down through three generations to Constance Boughey who married Whitehall Degge.

They had a son Simon Boughey Degge. Whitehall Degge died in 1667. In 1678 Constance married Thomas Whitgreave of Moseley Old Hall. Thomas was an ardent Catholic and had been honoured for the part that he had played in helping the future Charles II escape from the Battle of Worcester and certain death.

In 1679 Constance wished to bring up her son in the Catholic faith. However her father-in-law Sir Simon Degge objected and approached the Privy Council to grant him wardship of his grandson. This was granted and Constance's son was taken from her. On their marriage Boughey Hall Farm passed into the Whitgreave family and stayed with this family until the 1920's.



*Winter at Boughey Hall Farm as it appears today*

### **The Oldham Family.**

A retired Indian judge J. Oldham bought Bellamour Hall in 1824. He died in 1857. He built Bellamour Lodge for his eldest daughter Ellen in 1851, which she later enlarged. Ellen was a great benefactor of the parish. She held a girls' school in the old Bellamour Hall and generously subscribed to the restoration of the church, donating the east window above the altar in memory of her father. She died in 1883. Her sister Elizabeth Harland built the almshouses in memory of Ellen and they are known as Oldhams Cottages. Captain C.S.D. Oldham Oldham inherited Bellamour Lodge and took up residence there in 1905 and gave much to the parish of Colton until his death in 1930.

### **The Horsfall Family.**

Thomas Berry Horsfall purchased Bellamour Hall when J. Oldham Oldham died in 1857.

He was the Member of Parliament for Liverpool and made considerable additions to the Bellamour estate. He was a great benefactor of the village. The school and original reading room were both endowed by him and he also donated the ground for the first cemetery.





*Thomas Berry Horsfall*

### John Heyliger Burt

John Heyliger Burt lived in Colton House from 1792 to 1817.



*Colton House 1921*

**B**orn in 1764 he inherited money and lands which included a 450 acre sugar plantation in St. Croix, a small island in the Caribbean.

**H**is father had been a member of the Council of Nevis, his grandfather a Chief Justice of St. Kitts, his great grandfather Deputy Governor of Nevis and his uncle Governor of the Leeward Islands. His mother's family had been Governors of St. Eustatius and were connected to two USA presidential families. John married Judith Robinson in 1796. She brought money and estates to the marriage having previously been married to one of the Okeover family. John Burt was a magistrate, and also a High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1805. He died at sea in 1817 when returning from a visit to his estates.

### Frederic Bonney.

**F**rederic Bonney was a member of a well known and highly regarded family. His father was headmaster of Rugeley Grammar School.

**F**rederic attended Marlborough School. Whilst in Australia from 1865 to 1881 he took many photographs. They were some of the first pictures to be taken of the Aborigines. His collection of photographs is held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. He returned to this country in the 1880's to reside in Colton House. He continued his photography taking many pictures in and around the village of Colton.



*Frederic Bonney above & below*



### Rev. Frederick Perrot Parker.

Rev. Parker was born in 1843. He was an Oxford graduate and the Rector of Colton from 1874 to 1921.

A great Staffordshire antiquarian, he wrote "Colton and the DeWasteneys Family" which was published in 1879. He was also a founder member of The William Salt Library in Stafford.

#### References.

Colton and the DeWasteneys Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private publication 1879.

#### Acknowledgements

Main research by Shirley Carter and Dorothy Bradbury with other contributions from Colton History Society members. The Cooper family. Dr. Anne Andrews. Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

#### Pictures

William Salt Library. Stafford  
Colton and the DeWasteneys Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private publication 1879.

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# The Life and Times of Frederic Bonney

## The family background of Frederic Bonney

Frederic Bonney was born in Rugeley in 1842 and was the seventh child of the Rev. Thomas Bonney and his second wife Eliza Ellen nee Smith. On his mother's side Frederic descended from a yeoman family named Pegg. They had held lands in Colton from at least the mid 1500's. His maternal grandfather Edward Smith inherited Old Wood, Parchfields and Newlands from his uncle John Pegg. Edward added to the family wealth whilst working in Manchester before returning to live at Crossley Stone in Rugeley.

Frederic's father, Rev. Thomas, was educated at Cambridge and became headmaster of Rugeley Grammar School and Vicar of Pipe Ridware. As headmaster he educated his younger brother Charles, who then went on to gain lasting fame by emigrating to Australia and becoming one of the celebrated pioneering overlanders who drove cattle on new routes down to Adelaide. He returned for four years to England and it is then that possibly the young Frederic and an older brother met their Uncle Charles. The two brothers then went on to follow in his footsteps and make challenging and distant careers also out in Australia.

## Frederic Bonney's Life.

Frederic was educated at Marlborough School and in 1865 travelled to Mount Murchison sheep station close to the settlement of Wilcannia that had been founded in 1859 on the Darling River in New South Wales. He went to join his older brother Edward who may have been there from the settlement's beginnings. Frederic established a base at Momba, some 50 miles to the north in the Paroo River basin. The 100 plus photographs in



Frederic Bonney with an Australian Aborigine

his Australian collection and the notes that he made, give a vivid account of his life and enjoyment during his 16 years in the outback. The remote homesteads at Momba and Mount Murchison and the supply centre at Wilcannia and Bourke are all recorded by him, contrasting with the shots he also took of the expanding cities such as Adelaide and Sydney; their tropical gardens and the natural beauty of the inland wooded areas.

Photography appears to have been his passion and he took many pictures of the settlers and the indigenous Aborigines. He took photographs of activities around the sheep stations: gathering and processing the wool and taking it by bullock wagons to the steamboat pulled barges ready for conveyance to Adelaide.

His brother Edward is reported in the 1870's to have taken charge of the Post Office at Wilcannia and this fits in with the fact that we know at this time a son of Charles Dickens was appointed as manager of Mount Murchison, presumably replacing Edward. Earlier Dickens' son had been an overseer at Momba and he appears there in one of Frederic's photographs.

During 1881 or soon after Frederic made a farewell trip further into the interior. Some of his photographs record this trip. Some of Bonney's most lasting and telling studies were of the Aboriginal people, their languages and customs. He was perhaps the first person to photograph them extensively. In turn they gave him a name. They called him "Yellow Bird Egg".

Soon after he and Edward returned to England. In 1883 Edward died and was buried in the churchyard at St. Augustine's, Rugeley. Later that year Frederic read a paper that he had written on "Some Customs of the Aborigines of the Darling River New South Wales" to an audience in London. For this research he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

In the late 1880's Frederic moved into Colton House which he



The Hall at Colton House showing some of Frederic Bonney's Australian Trophies





May Day celebrations

rented from the Horsfall family until 1902.

He took many beautiful photographs of Colton, its inhabitants and its surrounds. These now form an invaluable photographic record of the village in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. A photograph of the infant class at St. Mary's school, Colton with their teacher was recently found to have the date 15<sup>th</sup> July 1898 plus all their names on the back in his handwriting!



One of the school photographs dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 1898 with the children's names on the reverse

Frederic was very active in his retirement years in England. He was a keen gardener and served as a church warden at St. Mary's Church in Colton. He was a school trustee and took a great interest in the school. He helped organise village activities for the children such as

skating, picnics and the May Queen celebrations, all of which he photographed.

In 1923 his sister Mrs Alice Jane Wetherall sent his collection of Australian photographs and notes to the Sydney Anthropological Society. Their historic value as some of the first photographs taken of Aborigines in New South Wales and the life of the early white settlers was soon acknowledged and the collection was transferred to the Mitchell Library in Sydney and the Canberra National Library.

In 1983 Mr. Robert Lindsay, Head of Wilcannia Central school, in New South Wales, wrote a book based on this collection of Bonney's photographs. He was assisted locally in his research into the family by Don Brown of Rugeley library

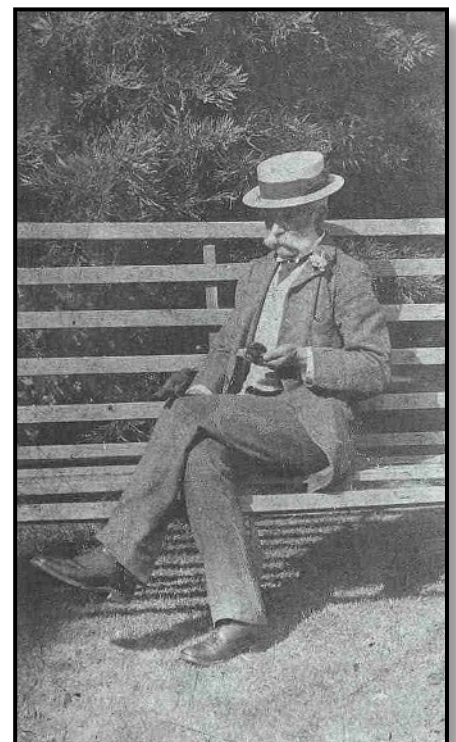
The book was about the life of Bonney whilst he lived and worked in Australia. He used Bonney's photographs and notes to illustrate for school children what life was like on the early sheep stations and also to give them some insight into the life of the Aborigines.

Bonney was the first chairman of the newly formed Colton Parish

Council and also became a Justice of the Peace serving on the Bench in Rugeley until his death.

For the last twenty years of his life Frederic moved to The Hollies in Church Street, Rugeley, close to his birthplace and his sister Mrs. Alice Jane Wetherall. He continued to serve as a school trustee and even became a school manager at Colton until well into his 70's.

He died on the 17<sup>th</sup>. January 1921 at the age of 78 and was buried in Rugeley Cemetery. His gravestone bears the inscription: "Traveller and tourer abroad. A worker for others at home" a fitting memorial for a very interesting man who left an invaluable photographic legacy to both Colton and Australia.



Frederic Bonney circa 1911 with his beloved wild birds

References.  
Robert Lindsay 'The Bonney Photographs' Published 1983 (By Western Readers P.O.Box Dubbo 2830 New South Wales).  
Reference Libraries at Rugeley, Canberra, Sydney and Perth.

Acknowledgements.  
Main research and text by Bev Croft.  
The Parr Family. Dorothy Bradbury. Mary Hill. Donald Brown.  
Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

Pictures.  
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# The Lost Buildings of Colton

Colton is a very old village dating back to Saxon times. The village is recorded in Domesday and from what we can estimate from its size and value according to the Domesday record, it was one of the biggest villages in this part of Staffordshire. Nothing survives of the Saxon period. Colton church is the oldest building and survives from the late Norman period; parts of the present day church, particularly the tower, date from the early 13<sup>th</sup> Century.



*New Bellamour Hall ravaged by fire in 1901*

But what of the other buildings in the village? Many have not survived the ravages of time although we do know of quite a few of them and even have documentary and photographic evidence of some of the buildings that no longer stand. This pamphlet aims to tell you about some of the buildings that we knew once existed.

## Houses of Note

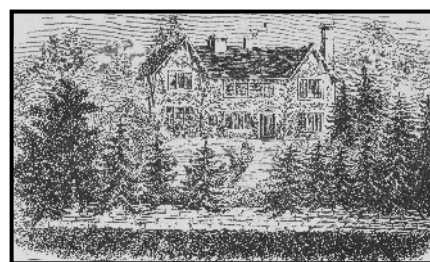
### Bellamour Hall

Situated on the left of the B5013 as you enter the village. Built in 1796 to replace the smaller hall and intended as the main home of the Lord of the manor of Colton. It was demolished in the 1920's.

### Colton Hall.

This house stood on the nearby site of the present day Colton Hall Barn conversions on the edge of the village. This for some centuries was the residence of the Lord of the Manor of Colton. Our records say that it was a very grand timber framed building with many rooms and a gateway. It was at its most magnificent in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when it belonged to Lord Aston of Forfar.

the Bagot family and remained in their ownership for hundreds of years. The chimneys of the Elizabethan house are still standing in the grounds of the present house.



*An artist impression of the Elizabethan house around the time of its demolition.*

It burnt down in 1645. It is alleged that Queen Elizabeth I visited this house whilst it was owned by the Gresley family.

### Little Hay Manor House

Situated half way up High Street on the right hand side, there is still a building on this site although adjacent to the Elizabethan house it replaces. This was the smallest manor in Colton mentioned in the Domesday survey. In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century it became one of the estates of

### The Original Rectory

This stood on the site now occupied by the new rectory. It was demolished in 1806 after the Rector complained bitterly that it was very damp due to its proximity to the brook and was seriously damaging the health of his family. The first village school for girls known as the "Webb School" and begun in 1818 by the Webb Trust fund is thought to have been held in a building on the site for some time.

### Tithe Barn.

This building stood where the present day New Rectory wall stands. For centuries it would have housed the Rector's tithes.



*St Mary's Church and Tithe Barn*



### Wilderley Hall

This was a large house that stood on the left hand side of the B5013 going towards Admaston. We know that it was occupied in 1692 but demolished soon after.

### Smaller Buildings

#### Bellamour Way

Somewhere around the area where Colton House now stands, one of the original Manor houses of Colton stood in very ancient times. Made of wattle, daub and thatch it is now long gone.

#### The Three Wheels Inn

Stood for many years where the Oldham Cottage Almshouses now stand. The rent from this inn was left in trust to pay for 20 poor girls of Colton to go to school. Demolished in 1883.

#### Butcher's Shop

A small butcher's shop stood in front of the Greyhound Inn in the present day car park until the late 1920's



Butchers Shop by the Greyhound Inn

#### The Reading Room

Erected for the people of Colton on land donated by Thomas Berry Horsfall in the late 19th Century, this served as the meeting place for the villagers for many years. Dances were a regular feature in the World War II. It was finally demolished in 1989 to make way for the new village hall.

#### Cottages by the Ancient Pinfold

Adjacent to the present day war memorial, these cottages surrounded the ancient pinfold where animals awaited collection by their owners when they had strayed. The

last one was demolished in the late 1970's.

#### Webb's Cottages

Three ancient half-timbered cottages on the right hand side of High Street. They were left in trust by the will of Thomas Webb in 1762 to provide rental income for the running of the school for 20 poor girls. They were demolished in the early 1960's.

#### Fisher's Row otherwise known as Chatterpie Row. High Street

A terrace of small houses higher up High Street on the left whose walls were reputed to be so thin that everyone could hear what everyone else was saying. Hence the nickname! They were demolished in the 1950s.

#### 'The Barracks', at Stockwell Heath

Built by Colton Parish Lands Trust as Alms houses; these were local houses for the poor of the parish. In the past Colton had a high percentage of people dependent upon the parish. They were demolished in the 1960's.



Fisher's Row (Chatterpie Row) High Street

### Thatched Cottages Hollow Lane

Three very old cottages demolished in the 1930's. For many years fish and chips were sold to the villagers from one of them.

#### Bank Top

There was a row of four old cottages at the top of Bank Top that were demolished in 1962.

This pamphlet only highlights certain dwellings that are of interest historically and have now been demolished. We hope that it gives a flavour of what Colton must have looked like in times gone by.

#### References.

Colton and the DeWastenev Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private Publication 1879.  
Documents held by Staffordshire Record Office.

#### Acknowledgements.

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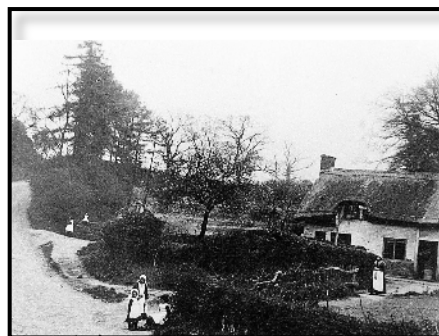
The sketch of Little Hay Manor House from Colton and the DeWastenev Family by Rev. F. Parker. Private Publication 1879.  
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Webb's Cottages High Street



Thatched Cottages Hollow Lane



The Barracks Stockwell Heath



New Bellamour Hall

# The Canal in Colton

In the mid 1700's the desperate need to transport large quantities of coal cheaply and manufactured goods like pottery safely - where horses and carts could not cope on the appalling roads of England - resulted in rich landowners and factory owners (such as Josiah Wedgwood at Stoke-on-Trent and the brewers at Burton-on-Trent) forming companies to build, run and profit by canal transportation. There was a meeting at Wolsley Bridge, Stafford, on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1765 to discuss the building of such a canal. (Ref. 1)



*Colton Mile Post (after the viaduct)*

'The Trent & Mersey Canal' (frequently called 'The T. & M.') is 93 miles in length and goes from Preston Brook (Runcorn near Liverpool) to Shardlow (near Derby). Having been responsible for surveying and engineering 'The Duke of Bridgewater's Canal' James Brindley was appointed surveyor for 'The T. & M.'. The Acts of Parliament to build both 'The Trent & Mersey' and 'The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canals' were passed on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 1766. After various problems 'The T. & M.' was finally completed in 1777. During those 11 years 600 men worked very hard

building it with picks, spades and barrows. Sadly James Brindley died in 1772. (Ref. 2)

In 1795 there were 211 boats registered on the 'T. & M.' to nine companies. Elizabeth Marsh of Colton had one boat and is both the only local person mentioned

and the only woman listed. (Ref. 1) Much of the canal looks the same now as when it was built. This early canal followed the contours of the land, as far as possible, to save on locks and tunnels and therefore tended to be longer. The later gradient canals went the shortest route with more locks and tunnels to save costs on journey times. Cast iron mileposts show the distance to the two ends of the canal. (Ref. 3)

There are many different types of bridges crossing the canal and over the course of time a lot have had to undergo repair, but some still look the same as when they were first built. Those which have been built since were usually to carry the railway or a new main road over the canal and lack the high 'hump' of the early bridges.

The original bridges were built by a team of 'brickies' - as distinct from the men who actually dug the canal, who were known as 'navvies'. which was shortened to 'navvies'. Most 'T. & M.' bridges were similar in design with a wooden arch being placed on the ground and the bricks being mortared in rows across. It was gradually built up to form the bridge, with ramps on either side made from the earth. Once the wooden former had been removed the 'bridge hole' was dug out for the actual canal. The rest of the earth made banks or was moved by horse and cart to where banks were needed.

Between Rugeley and the Great Haywood Junction with 'The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal' (often called 'The Staffs. & Worcester.') there are examples of most sorts of bridges and other canal features found on the 'Trent & Mersey'.

Leaving Rugeley (towards The Haywoods) at the bend by the 'Bloody Steps' there was a wharf for coal-boats to unload for the Brindley Bank Pumping Station which pumps water from a bore-hole to a reservoir.



*Canal Aqueduct over the River Trent*

In a plan of 1816 there was a 'flint wharf' on the opposite side (*Ref. 4*) where flint carrying boats were unloaded from the canal on to river boats to go to the nearby Colton Mill, which was on the site of the Trent Valley Industrial Estate.

There is an aqueduct over the River Trent with the tow path on one side of the canal and the public footpath on the other side.

The next bridge is Bridge 68 and is Colton turn-over bridge, where the tow path changes side and so the horse which was towing went up the ramp, over the bridge and down the ramp (on the same side of the bridge as the boat), so that the rope did not have to be unhitched from the loaded narrow boat, and then the horse went under the bridge to continue towing along the tow path, now on the opposite side of the canal – hence the name 'turn over bridge'. It is also a foot

where boats up to 72' (23 metres) could be turned by using the wind and a long pole. There is another winding hole at Haywood Junction.

Wharf Cottage was built in about 1778 as a canal worker's cottage, but its original wharf purpose is unknown. Opposite on the tow path is a storm water sluice to a field ditch, which prevents this section of the canal flooding.

Bridge 69 is Taft Bridge which is an accommodation bridge and was built for the sole use of the local farmer to take a horse and cart or livestock into his fields.

Bridge 70 has been replaced with a very wide new bridge to carry the main road (the A51) at Wolseley Bridge. (There is also a large road bridge over the River Trent. In the 1700s an earlier bridge was washed

Bridge 71 is another accommodation bridge and is located beside Colwich Lock."

Bridge 72 takes Meadow Lane into Little Haywood where boat-ers stabled their horses at the pub.

Shugborough Carriage Bridge is unnumbered because it was built later by the Anson Family for carriage access from Shugborough Hall (now National Trust) to go to Church. Being more recent it is of a totally different design and has metal sides. A second bridge used to continue across the River Trent.

Bridge 73 is beside Haywood Lock (with a 4' 2" rise) and the Lock House (now a restaurant). It is a high humped bridge the width of a horse and cart and leads to the famous narrow Essex Packhorse Bridge and Shugborough Hall. Along the main road there used to be a forge for making horses' shoes.

Haywood Junction has a roving bridge which meant that horses towing boats up and down 'The T. & M.' could cross over the 'Staffs. & Worcester.', or they could go round on a turnover bridge (like Colton) to go on to the tow path for 'The Staffs. & Worcester' without the need to unhitch the horse. When standing on the bridge it is worth noticing that the two bridge sides/parapets are of different styles – one being the 'T. & M.' bridge design and the other belongs to the 'Staffs. & Worcester.' Company's design! This bridge also acts as a 'winding hole'.



*Colton Turnover Bridge*

bridge for the 'Staffordshire Way' footpath, between Colton and Wolseley Bridge, and an accommodation bridge for the farmer.

Just beyond this bridge is a 'winding hole' (pronounced 'wind' as blows, not a clock key turning)

away by the flood waters of the Trent.) It was along this stretch in July 1839 that the murder of Mrs. Christina Collins took place and her body was removed two days later at the steps in Rugeley – since called 'The Bloody Steps'.

#### Acknowledgements.

*Ref. 1* Historic Waterway Scenes, The Trent & Mersey by Peter Lead.

*Ref. 2* James Brindley – The First Canal Builder by Nick Corbly.

*Ref. 3* Many mileposts have been replaced by the original foundry.

*Ref. 4* 'Waterways World' July 2005 – Brindley's Bank & Colton Mill by Tom Foxon.

Text and research by Julie Thorn, additional information, David and Dorothy Bradbury. Editors Gill Sykes/Gay Lawrence.

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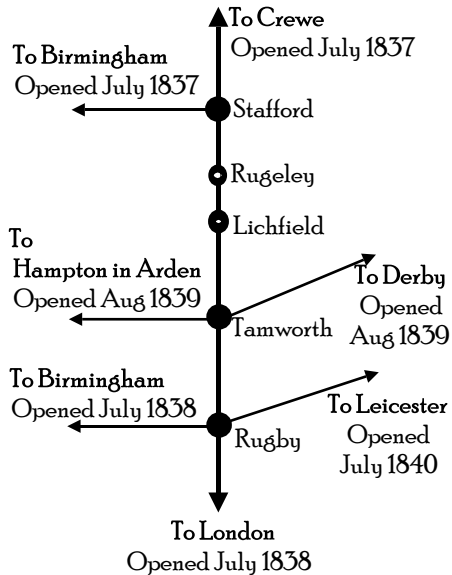
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# The Railway in Colton

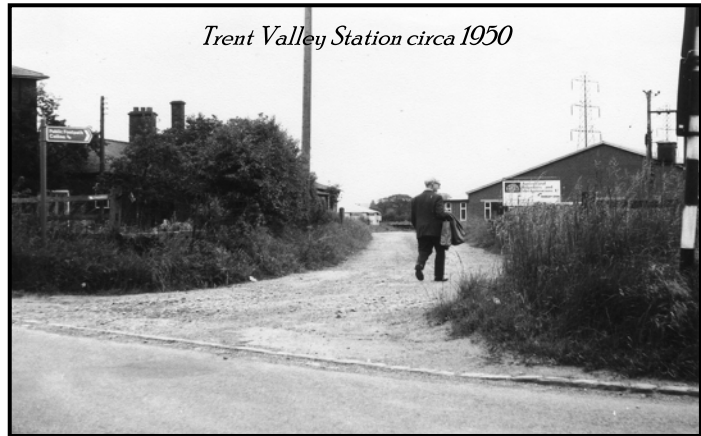
## Trent Valley Railway Stafford to Rugby 1847

& connections



Today travel over long distances is commonplace but during pre-Victorian times very few people ever left the area in which they were born. Therefore the coming of the steam engine transformed many communities offering them both opportunities to travel and new forms of employment. This certainly was the case in Colton.

In the spring of 1846 the landscape of the Trent Valley was changing. For centuries the main activity of the valley had been agriculture but now the railway to London was under construction. Hundreds of labourers using picks and shovels were at work building a low embankment across the western edge of Bellamour Park, Colton, and onwards towards the site of the railway station. The hillside close by Colton Mill Farm would reverberate from explosions of black powder as the sandstone was blasted away. This stone would be fashioned by masons to face the locally made bricks used in building the stations and bridges. Much physical labour was used by the men who worked from dawn until dusk.



*Trent Valley Station circa 1950*

The original planned railway of 1841, the Stafford to Rugby Railway, was rejected by Parliament, there had been much opposition from landowners. Sir Charles Wolseley of Wolseley Hall was a noted objector. However in 1845 the Trent Valley Railway Act passed through Parliament successfully. The new company was given powers to raise £1,250,000 in £20 shares and £416,666 in loans for operating purposes. On completion the line would be leased to the London and Birmingham, Grand Junction and Manchester and Birmingham Railways. This became known as "The Premier Line" and took over the Trent Valley Railway when the line opened in 1847.

Sir Robert Peel M.P. for Tamworth performed the first sod cutting at Tamworth on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1845 and the line was officially opened on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1847. That day saw great activity at Tamworth. A special train left London Euston conveying company directors, railway officials and pub-

lic figures. Other trains journeyed there from Birmingham and Derby (that line had operated since 1839) and another train left Stafford calling at the stations along the line to pick up local dignitaries.

There is no record of the numbers attending. As this latter train proceeded towards Tamworth, it is recorded that at every station brass bands and choirs attended and flags were flown. It can be assumed that James Oldham of Bellamour Hall, whose land the railway company had purchased, attended this gathering.

After the opening ceremony 1,300 people gathered for a feast. The guests included George Stephenson, his son Robert and Robert's assistant engineer George Bidden.

The chief engineer of the railway Thomas Brassey was later to be employed by Edward Charles Blount (born at Bellamour Hall 1805) in the



*Rugeley Trent Valley Station at Colton circa 1895*

construction of railways in France. Thomas Brassey was a strong disciplinarian who was much loved by his employees. It is of interest to note that when he was constructing railways, there was none of the violence associated with the railway labourers working for other engineers.

The Rugeley to Cannock line opened on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1859 whereby people from Colton could travel to Walsall and Birmingham directly. Rugeley Town Station on that line was not built until 1870 and at that time the station in Colton Parish became known in the timetable as Rugeley Trent Valley. The station signs began to portray this on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1917.

By 1890 the increase in traffic called for a four-track system. Also included in these plans were improved parcel and goods facilities. A new Station Master's house and the row of cottages known as "Fog Cottages" were built and still exist today. "Fog Cottages" earned their nickname from the bells being installed to call out to the men to place detonators on the line in foggy conditions to help the train drivers.



*Fog Cottages*

This four track system between Colwich and Armitage opened on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1902.



During the first half of the twentieth century this station was a hive of activity and employed many people. Milk from local farms left the goods yard by train in great quantities. Animals were conveyed to and from all parts of the country. World War I saw many thousands of men arrive at and depart from the war training camps on Cannock Chase.

During World War II Royal Air Force personnel changed trains on their journey from the Brindley Heath Camp otherwise known as R.A.F. Hednesford. Coal for Rugeley Gas Co. arrived in trucks before being conveyed by lorry to the gas-



works. This was needed because the coal mined on Cannock Chase was not a gas producing coal.

Dr. Beeching's Report in the 1960's proposed closing the Trent Valley Station completely but a reduced Stafford to Rugby service was retained. However on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1965 the last passenger train travelled to Walsall and

goods traffic soon ceased too. In October 1972 the main station buildings were demolished and the station became an unstaffed halt. The goods shed remains and also the stables along Colton Road, these now being commercial properties.

Owing to public demand the line to Walsall has reopened to passengers. On the main line trains speed by at 125 m.p.h. In just over 150 years times have certainly changed with increased pressure on our road network and successive governments working hard to encourage people and goods back onto public transport. One wonders what Trent Valley Station at Colton will look like in 2047.

Many Colton residents have found employment both at Trent Valley Station and on the trains themselves ever since the railway has come to Colton. The Census Records of the following 100 years portray the fact. Some of these workers can be seen in this picture taken at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> Century.

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# Occupations in Colton

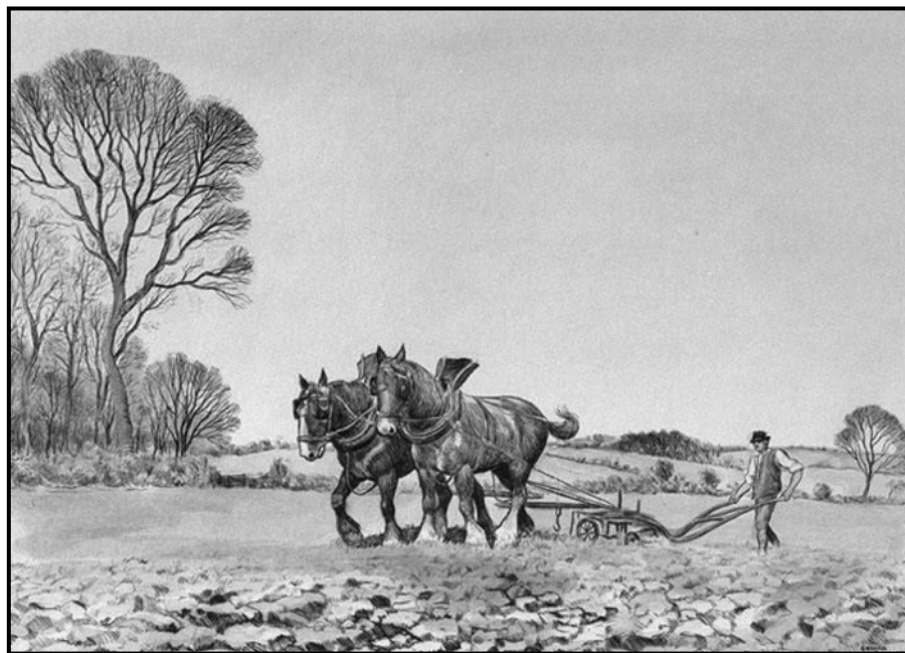
The population of Colton in 1901 was not greatly different from that of today: 760 then, compared to 701 recorded in 2001. The occupational structure of Colton in those times, however, was very different. In an era before the wide-spread use of cars and mechanisation work on, or related to the land accounted for no less than 32.5% of all those in employment.

In all 101 people (96 male, 5 female) out of a working population of 311 worked in agriculture in 1901, com-

Sixty seven women and girls were in employment and they represented some 21.5% of the working population: which might appear a surprisingly high figure, till one sees that almost three quarters of them were in service.

From housemaids and parlourmaids to cooks and a lady's companion, these women maintained, amongst others, Bellamour Hall and Lodge, Colton House, the Rectory and the large farm-houses in and around the village.

admittedly 11 of these were tanners' labourers, one a flesher and one a scudder, removing bits of fat and other unsavoury residues from the hides. A southerly wind, and even the return from work of the men themselves, would no doubt have had a frequent olfactory impact on the village, especially in warm weather. Apart from these, the Derby Oxide Colour Works, down by the River Trent bridge, was a source of employment for a handful of men. These would be clearly distinguished by the red pigment on their clothes and skin.



*One third of the working population worked in agriculture in 1901*

pared to just 26 people, 7% of the working population, in 2001.

If one adds to the 1901 figures those in associated trades: blacksmiths, wheelwrights carters, etc, the importance of this sector is even more striking. With 17 people declaring that they worked with horses – waggoners, teamsters, two ploughboys – we must imagine a village whose sights, sounds and smells reflected this key mode of transport.

Despite the pre-dominance of agriculture and domestic service, industry did play a part in employment, albeit demanding low levels of skill. The leather industry in Rugeley (cf. Leathermill Lane), in particular the tannery, provided jobs. Thirteen men were involved in tanning processes, though

Mechanisation of one kind had affected work patterns in Colton by this time. The coming of the railway in 1847 brought new kinds of work. By 1901, no fewer than 31 Coltonians, all men, were working on the railway. Six of these were navvies or labourers, but others had found employment requiring more skill, such as bricklayers, clerks and signalmen. We can visualise the daily trudge to and from Rugeley of this relatively new breed of worker, supporting a mode of transport that opened up the village to rapid travel and a much wider range of external influences.

Crafts were still practised to a significant degree, by both men and



*Hay making at Manor Farm  
circa 1930*



women. Four were black-smiths, and one of these had an apprentice; there were five carpenters, a joiner, a wheelwright and a cordwainer (shoemaker), the last of these not easy to find nowadays! Four dressmakers accounted for the female contribution to this category.

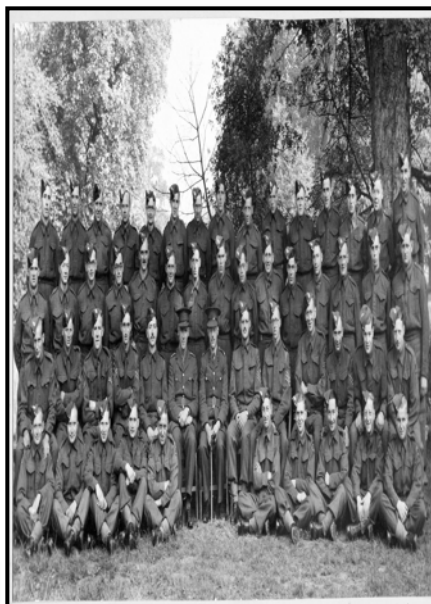
Trades and commerce were fairly important in 1901, engaging 20 males and 3 females, representing 8% of total employment. Five butchers, no less, lived in Colton at this time, in addition



*Workers at Manor Farm*

to which there were two butchers' assistants and a slaughterman. A leather merchant, a builders' merchant, two publicans and a beerhouse/shopkeeper at the Dun Cow, also figure among this group, as do a laundress, working on her own account, and two laundress workers. The make-up of this category presents a sharp contrast to the kinds of trades we see in Colton today.

Compared to today the professions were not, in numerical terms, very prominent. There were nevertheless two schoolmistresses, one of these being Lizzie Yates, possessor of a well-known Colton surname; a "certificated" elementary schoolmaster; an assistant teacher and a pupil teacher. They formed important members of the then professional class. Unusually, an actor and an actress, Harry and Ada Yardley, lived in Hamley Lodge, with their domestic servant. They bought a touch of the exotic to the employment pattern of the day. Frederic Bonney, another notable person who lived in Colton House,



*Colton resident in service at the turn of the 19th Century*

appears in the records as a magistrate. Professional employment in 2006 is hugely more significant, with managerial and professional work occupying 37% of those of working age, with education, health and social work outstanding among them. One wonders what our predecessors of a hundred years ago would make of the 31 full-time students (aged 16+) living in Colton in 2001.

In conclusion, the bare figures of employment patterns at the start of the last century give a fascinating glimpse into the life of the village. We see a village, in spite of the advent of the railway, much more self-contained and sufficient than today, with the work on the land, on the 13 active farms, and trades related to agriculture dominating employment. Industry offered low level jobs and professional and clerical work was much less prominent than now.



*Mr Williscroft, the village wheelwright, carpenter & coffin maker*

Chart 1 shows the predominance of agriculture and service (mainly domestic and female) in Colton's employment structure in 1901. Note in Chart 2 the paucity of professional and clerical jobs (3% and 2.3% respectively). While 22% of the population work in industry, these are mainly low level jobs, especially unskilled labouring.

By 2001 agriculture has shrunk to 7% of the workforce (26 people), while management and the professions comprise 37%. Full-time education for the over 16's provides 11%, a situation unknown in 1901.

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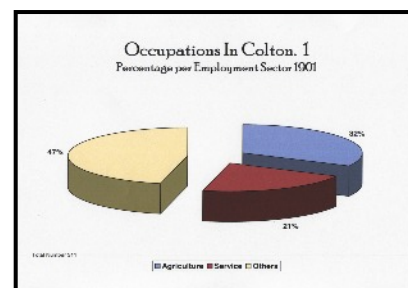
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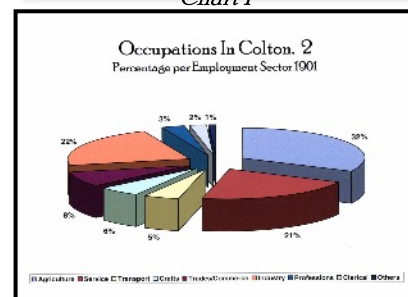
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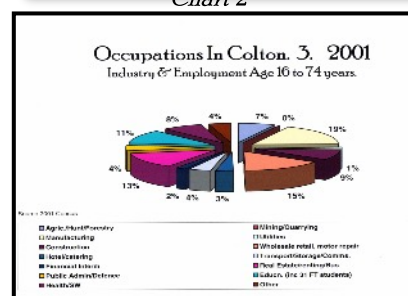
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*Chart 1*



*Chart 2*



*Chart 3*

# Colton and World War II

Colton is a small village in Staffordshire, situated approximately two and a half miles from Rugeley. When war broke out in 1939 the population was about 630 and many people were employed on farms either as labourers, stockmen or later in the land army or as servants at one of the big houses. There was a Church of England church, a school, a Reading Room, two shops, a post office and two public houses. Transport was sometimes by pony and trap. Main shopping would be in Rugeley with a bus running twice a week, or in Stafford by catching a train at Trent Valley Station. Other provisions would be delivered by a butcher and a baker. These were brought to the door in vans. As petrol was rationed they were given a special petrol allowance.



*A government poster urging people to "Get Growing"*

War was declared on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and as with everywhere else in the land precautionary measures had to be adhered to. All forms of lighting in houses, streets and even headlights on cars had to be masked with blackout material. Air raid wardens and billeting officers were appointed amongst the villagers. The rationing of food very quickly became a way of life and people were encouraged to dig up their gardens and grow their own produce. As with many villages the war did not affect them straight away because unlike the cities and towns, there were no bombing raids. However the reality of war soon became evident when a squad of Royal Engineers was billeted at Colton House.

In January 1940 there was severe weather. Snow was 3ft deep on the main road and piled up to 6ft up the hedgerows. The school was closed and the Colton Road was impassable for ten whole days. The soldiers from Colton House helped to clear the road for one way traffic.

In June 1940, 68 evacuees from St Saviours Church of England School, Westgate on Sea, Kent, arrived at Lichfield station and after a drink and medical inspection, continued their journey by bus to Colton. This bewildered little group each with a label, gas mask and small case were "chosen" by women from the village for accommodation. Ten children were sent to Hamstall Ridware and nine to Mavesyn Ridware parishes.

The evacuees attended the local school, initially taught by their own teachers. Then later they were taught together with the village children. The village children admired them for coming such a long way from their homes, but they were not so thrilled to have to share some of their toys and clothes! However they brought along new games and

skipping rhymes and soon marbles was very popular. The evacuees were horrified by the sanitation and disliked having to move around in the pitch dark as no chink of light was allowed. They soon became used to having a bath once a week in a galvanised bath in front of the fire, in some cases with water from a pump.

On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1940, 12 delayed action bombs fell in Colton Parish, six fell in Wilmour Farm fields, one in Lount Farm fields, one behind the church, one in Martlin fields and three on Martlin Hill. The bomb disposal squad of the Royal Engineers secured the bombs at Wilmour Farm; others around the Martlin disappeared in the running sandy soil never to be discovered.

Rationing was carefully monitored. The fact that they were in the country meant that most homes grew their own vegetables. The headmaster at the school had all the boys growing vegetables in the school garden. Some meat was available. When one animal was slaughtered another had to be available to the Ministry.

Everybody had to have an Identity Card that they had to carry with them at all times. At the beginning of the war gas masks were issued. Children had practices at school where



*Ration Books & Identity Cards*





*Children at school in Westgate on Sea before they were evacuated*

they had to go into an air raid shelter and wear their gas masks. Rationing went on for some time after the war ended, the last to finish was for sweets in July 1954.

National Savings was greatly encouraged by the headmaster and the school generously supported "Wings for Victory week" and "Salute the Soldier week". The school children also collected massive amounts of rose hips from the hedgerows to be turned into rose hip syrup for the troops.

By 1944 some American soldiers were billeted at Colton House. This was a great source of fascination to the children, who delighted in catching sweets thrown to them by the soldiers as they passed through the village. Some coloured Americans were stationed near Admaston and villagers remember one truck bouncing off the parapet of the village bridge causing considerable damage and then it somersaulted. It is thought two men were seriously hurt. Notably, Harry Secombe a famous performer was stationed in the grounds of Bellamour Hall.

When E.N.S.A came to entertain the troops the children were often included. Occasionally a mobile cinema, in the back of a large van, showed films. Other times children went to the Reading Room to see films presented by the National Savings Committee. The Reading room was used by the NAAFI and also used for dances for villagers and troops to enjoy. One villager met her future husband there.

Italian prisoners of war who were interned in camps near Rugeley were sent to work at local farms, cycling out from Rugeley in their dark brown battledress, sewn with brightly coloured patches. In the evenings they would make toys for the children.

Then at last on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945, V.E. Days were celebrated. The school was closed and a tea for the children was provided by Mrs Morley on the lawn of Bellamour Lodge and impromptu sports took place with Savings Stamps for prizes.

But not all the families were able to celebrate the end of the war. Sadly Harry Devalle, a villager who was serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion King Shropshire Light Infantry, died on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1944. He is remembered on the village war memorial with many others who had died in World War I.

We have been in contact with many of the evacuees who came to Colton; some of whom have recently visited the village.



*Remembrance Day service circa 1920*



*Evacuee children*

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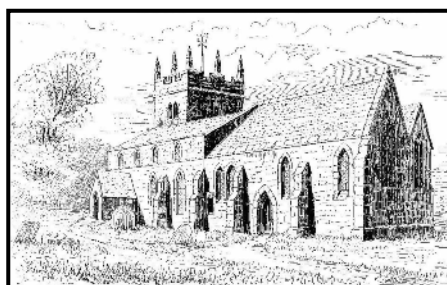
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