

The History
of

Colton

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COLTON

In this part of Staffordshire there are many English villages which, though they are nearly all being "developed", still manage to keep at least some of ^{their} these old world charm. Colton is no exception, it has grown rapidly and is still growing, but it is still a community, as it has been in its various ways all through its history. New people have moved into the area, and young people and children make up at least two thirds of the population. There is a modernised school and a modernised village pub, a playing field for children, but Colton remains an attractive English village, and it's a very friendly place.

Colton is roughly two miles north of Rugeley and east of the B5013, it lies in the extreme north-west of Lichfield Rural District and includes the hamlet of Stockwell Heath. It covers 3,764 acres.

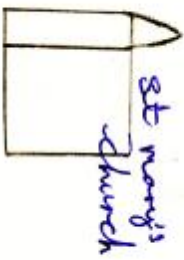
The surrounding countryside is pleasant, mainly agricultural, with the river Trent to the south, and river Slythe which flows from Blithfield Reservoir - to the north.

The purpose of this project is to show development and changes in a country village from the 17th century to the 20th century.

COLTON

The conclusion is that Colton is now surrounded by green belt agricultural land so it is unlikely for it to be further developed except from the infill of the odd bits of land.

A map of Colton



This is where the Hall used to be.

houses

Bellman's lodge

bridge

Bouffault Hill farm.

Colton school

The plantation ground used to be here

Colton House

Main street

The old forge

village houses

Half houses

gravel and

Allen House

houses

houses

The main market

M

Stockwell Heath

High street

fishery low used to be here

High street

Shop

Hambley House

Hallow lane.

The Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin
Colton

NEAR RUGELEY. STAFFORDSHIRE

DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD



COLTON CHURCH - TOWER AND NORTH AISLE.

Flower Festival

19th and 20th AUGUST, 1967

The church will be open for inspection
from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day.
Evensong at 7 p.m. conducted by
The Rector, the Revd. A. Stanley Towlson.

an offprint from Colton
Parish church.

COLTON CHURCH.

Colton church is mentioned in the "Domesday Book" During this long period of time the building has changed in form and character, though not in its essential purpose. Visitors may see traces of "Norman" work in the base of the Tower; examples of "Early English" architecture, especially the South chancel alterations, undertaken, under the supervision of the famous Victorian architect G.E. Street, in 1851. Successive generations have supported and maintained the fabric of this ancient Parish church, listed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government as a building of special architectural and historic interest, and it may now be seen to better advantage from the spacious towns surrounding the church.

A flower festival of church decoration is being held on Saturday and Sunday, 19th and 20th August, 1967, and we hope that many visitors, on private excursions or on coach outings, will want to come and see the flowers. Having done so, and looked at the church, and perhaps prayed in it, as many have done for about a thousand years, they might like to contribute to its needs. The particular need of the moment is for funds for essential roof repairs, now in progress.

The church will open from 10am to 10pm (Evening at 7p.m.) each day

ST MARY'S CHURCH. COLTON.

One of the oldest churches in the vicinity of Rugeley is that which stands in the village of Colton.

When the church was built is uncertain. The church, we are told, originally consisted of a tower north aisle, south porch, chancel and a north chancel when the church was rebuilt in 1851.

The church was brought to its presents state under the direction of Mr. Street, the eminent architect, then the Rector then the Rev. Madril Seaton, aided by the generosity of Miss Oldham of Bellamour.

CORN PLANTING IN COLTON

Corn planting is to this day done, for the decoration at harvest time in Colton church.

About a week before Harvest festival some of the members of the community go out to gather or collect the corn. They call on local farmers and gather or collect the corn. They call on local farmers and gather what they want from the fields, or take away the sheaves that have been put to one side for church decorating. The wheat, barley and oats acquired, is taken to the village hall.

Then the next day about a dozen women - usually members of the Mothers Union - collect in the hall, each one equipped with an apron, a ball of string, and a pair of old scissors.

The tables are arranged about the room with chairs for the workers to sit on. Corn is every where, first of all the corn has to be sorted out, (only the best pieces are used) and cut into lengths of about 12 inches little bundles of the wheat, barley and oats are put on each table, and the experienced people begin the work.

The less experienced people keep all of the

plaiters supplied with the corn.

To make a plait you take seven pieces of oats and tie them together with a piece of string attached to which is a label giving the length required for the finished article, and directions about where it is to be placed in church. When the seven pieces have been tied together one twist of the plait is made, at each movement one piece of barley is added, until seven pieces have been used. Seven pieces of wheat or wheat are then used like the barley, then the oats, and sequence is repeated until the plait is the required length. It is then finished off as it was begun with seven pieces of oats, this time however, the oats are placed the opposite way round, to cover the stalks at the end of the plait, and make a neat finish.

Pieces of plaited corn are put around the archways, church doorways, pillars screens and pulpit etc. as desired, with berries and flowers corn plaiting makes a lovely way of decorating.

This has been done for many many years and has always been done this way.

THE FREE SCHOOL.

The free school, which formerly existed in this village, was founded and endowed partly with money subscribed by the neighbouring gentry, and partly with some parochial levies raised for the purpose, which produced a sum of £350. The amount collected was laid out in 1769 in the purchase of a school house with three acres of land at Colton, and 19 acres of at Uttoxeter. A further sum of £500 was given towards the free school in 1820 by John Spence Esq. The master also the interest on £80 produced by the sale of timber on the school land. The annual income of the school was £50, and forty children were educated in the same.

The Girls' free School was endowed in 1801 by Thomas Webb, with the "Wheels public house and another dwelling in Colton, the lease of which expired in 1861. In reference to the old inn above alluded to, authorities have differed respecting its actual name. Its site was just past the private grounds of Colton House where the Oldham almshouses were erected by Mrs Horwood in 1884, the old Inn being pulled down to make room for them.

BELLAMOUR

Bellamour in Station meaning "Good Lord" Lady Blount - a descendent of another Norman family the le Blonds - built another Hall in 1796 for her son, for some time the original hall was used as a chapel, and the other part was used as a store - then later it became a school - now this day only a broken wall and window frames are left.

The "new Hall" was purchased in 1824 by Mr. J. Aldham, who in 1851 built Bellamour Lodge for his daughter Mr. Aldham died in 1857 and the property was sold to Mr T. B. Horsfell, who is still remembered by older members of the community - especially for his gift to the village in 1921 of the Reading Room. The "new Hall" was demolished in the 1920s, now only Bellamour Lodge remains, and farm buildings stand where the two grand houses and their lovely gardens used to be. The estate consisting of about 500 acres.

In 1770 Sir Walter Blount owned the farm known as the Newlands and it was occupied by one man Thomas Hicken.

staff at Bellmour Hall
- 1916.



Butler.
Head Gardener and three others.
Coachman and stable boy.
Blacksmith and odd job man.
page boy - acting footman.
Housekeeper.
Cook.
Kitchen maid.
Two house maids.
four ladies maids.
farm hands (three).
Woman helper to clean up.
hodge keeper, also was
head gardener.

Page Boy At Bellamour Hall

My uncle, a footman to the Horsefells at Bellamour Hall, told me they wanted a page boy. I went for an interview. I rang the bell and that was the first time I saw the Butler. He told me to come inside. We climbed a magnificent staircase, with paintings hanging on the walls all round us; they were wonderful.

At the top of the stairs was a large landing. There sat Mrs and Miss Horsefell, this was a sight I shall never forget. Mrs Horsefell reminded me of a picture of Queen Victoria we had at home, even down to her clothes. I was a little frightened.

Then Miss Horsefell spoke, "Have you brought the letters we asked for?"

"One from the schoolmaster, Mr Andrews, the other from Rev. Burrow".

They read these carefully, then asked about my parents, were they Church of England, etc. and my early life.

Miss Horsefell stood up and shook hands. I had got the job.

Mrs Farley, the Butler, gave me a letter to take to Keys tailor shop for a dark grey ready made suit. I was to start in two days and bring shirts, black boots etc. The Horsefells would supply a livery for special occasions.

The Butler put me through my paces how to lay the table, how to serve

at lunchtime, I had to carry trays of food from the kitchen to the dining room, ring the gong in the hall when lunch was served look after drinks, take away used plates. All ^{cutlery} and silver had to be taken to the butler's pantry where I had to wash them one at a time with a sponge and nothing else, when dry they were put in the safe.

My day started about 6.30 am I had to take trays to the kitchen for early drinks. The ladies maids took trays to the ladies bedrooms and I took one to the butler, I made fires for the ladies and in the servants hall. It was then time to get the table ready for breakfast.

After that I had my own breakfast in the kitchen with the other servants.

One day I shall never forget. We had all had special training on how to wait on at table for 3 or 4 days, the kitchen staff had extra help and instruction on how to prepare meals from a London Hotel. A Royal princess was coming to Rugeley by train to open a soldiers club over keys shop. The she and lady's would travel for lunch at Bellonour.

We awaited the guests that day on the front steps. When she arrived she went past all the staff into the drawing room. We all went

quickly back to our work remembering all of our training I beat the dinner gong and the ladies proceeded into the dining room. meals always begun by saying grace. within half an hour it was all over and the party left for Stafford.

Every two weeks I had time off duty after lunch to visit my family but before I left I had to finish all my work. I would return, running nearly all the way to my home Rugeley and would arrive about 3 o'clock but had to be back at the hall by six, so the butler could have the evening off. Sometimes the butler would be cross and make me do jobs and I would arrive home late.

Every three months pay day would finally arrive. My wages were £3 for the full three months. This money was taken home to my mother.

Eventually, I left because I wanted more money for my mother and that was the end of my page boy career.

THE GHOST OF BELLAMOUR HALL.

The story of the ghost at Bellamour hall. There is a ghost at Bellamour hall, he was a tall gentleman he used to wear a deerstalker hat and a grey suit with baggy trousers and brown boots, he was good looking apparently.

He used to go into peoples bedrooms and wake people up. He was not a frightening ghost - he was quite gentle, he used to tap people on the shoulder to wake them up, then beckon them to follow him downstairs. Then he used to open the bureau drawer - looking for something he wanted in the library, then he used to go down some more stairs and out into the garden, and stand by the well, He then used to move all the boots and shoes, he carries his own boots in his hand, he had got a thing about footwear. He used to wake people up nearly every night clattering about with the footwear. He also used to walk up and down the stairs in a bewildered sort of way.

The people that lived there had him exorcised and he never come back again.

COLTON HOUSE.

Colton House, was built during the reign of Queen Anne or George 1st was once an impressive residence too. It was occupied in 1777 by a Mr. William Piggot "a gentleman of good family was said to have kept horries there". Lady Blount lived there also while the "New Hall of Bellonour" was being built (1796) and the High Sheriff of Staffordshire was occupant during the "45" of George III. Mr. Horsefall bought the house in 1805, and later it became a boys school. In 1880 Mr. Bonney lived there, and it was during his time that the gardens and grounds reached their peak of beauty.

Mr. Bonney was the celebrated naturalist who spent years in Australia studying the Aboriginal people. He became used to the seclusion of bush life and was an ardent lover of nature. He kept a museum of curiosities, pictures and photographs relating to his studies and travel, and he was a very kind man, popular with people in the village.

Children were welcomed to the grounds at the Colton House once a year, and Mr. Bonney gave them tea on the lawn, the May-day Celebrations used to be held there also.

COLTON HOUSE

This gentleman loved flowers and birds, and during his time "Rovecot field" was a pleasure to behold, with its pretty walks through the plantation of trees and fishing lake. Somewhere was an avenue of trees, and the glasshouses were filled with grape vines, figs, and chrysanthemums of all kinds and all different colours. Colton House and grounds at that time was said to have been a "Naturalist's paradise".

This first "Colton House" was surrounded by bogs and swamps - the High Street was once a river - and a deep ditch was dug, a wooden palisade erected as protection for this primitive residence which afforded so little comfort.

Colton House now has a grade two status in the Ministry of Housing and local government's list of buildings of historical and architectural interest, and we hope it will be conserved.

The Bell inn and The wheels

Hamley House, The alms Houses, oldhom cottage
crabtree farm, chatterpie row, willicroft row.

Hamley House was built about 1707 and has been altered from time to time, there was probably an earlier dwelling on the same site. There is a curious well, and an old window blocked up in one of the outbuildings. Mentioned family early in Colton's history are the hows, Crabtree farm Colton cottage - a chapel on Steven's hill - Chatterpie Row, Willicroft Row, and two or three cottages. There were two black-smiths shops in the village, and a public house called the Bell Inn once stood where the Oldhom's cottages are today. There was a public house called "The wheels". In 1830 the village stocks were still there, made to hold two people, and stood by the old Inn (the Bell), by the garden wall of Colton House.

The first constable in charge of the stocks was a man called Fisher who did live in the village.

There are eight alms-houses on the main street, on the right - erected in 1884 by Mrs. Horland, and a Reading Room which was founded by the late Mr. Horsefell.

The Plantation In
Colton
C. 1888.



The Children of

The Age

C. 183333.

