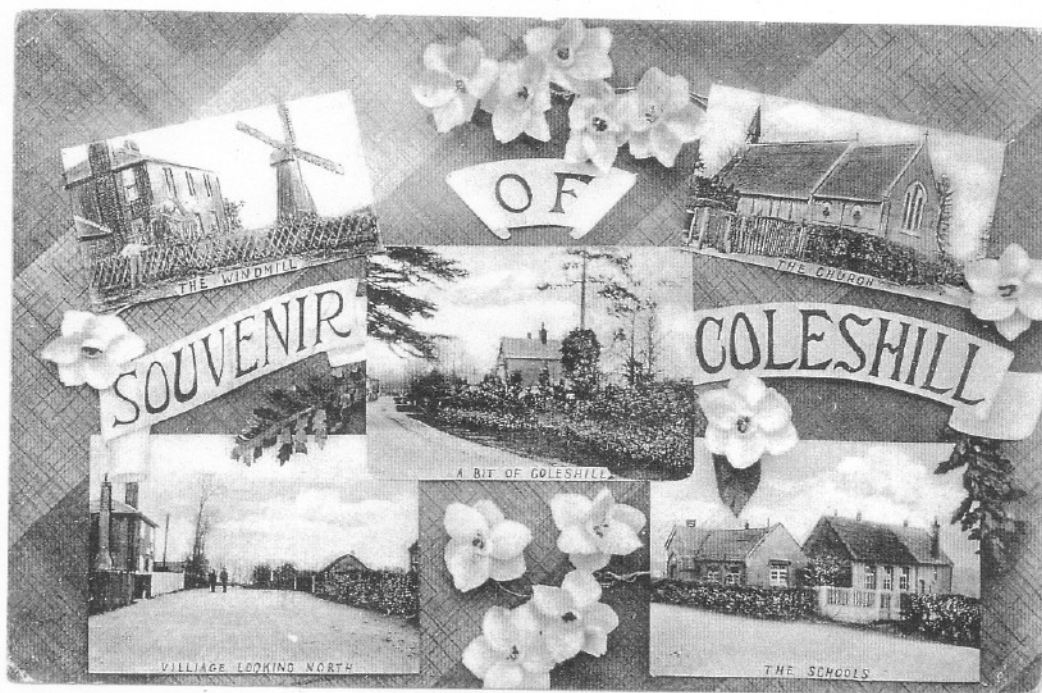




AN EVENING WITH

CHARLES PUSEY, LOUIE EDWARDS, RUBY MAY AND SYD WARE



Charles Pusey: Good evening. You do not know me though you know my brother, Douglas much better. Unfortunately he is in hospital waiting to have an operation. Perhaps you would like to remember him in your prayers tonight. My name is Charles Pusey. I am 82 years old and the eldest of the Pusey clan. My uncle was the first Pusey to come to Coleshill and he came to the village in about 1890. There were twelve children in my father's family and he was the youngest. When he left school, he went to work for his uncle in Coleshill and helped him on the farm. My uncle eventually went to Canada and so my father took on the farm. My father whose name was Charles married my mother, Edith, who came from London. They lived in the Mill House and ran Windmill Farm. I went to school in the village and joined my father on the farm when I left school. I helped him on the farm and also with all the other activities that he was engaged in. I left Coleshill in 1930 to start farming at South Heath and Hyde End. My son now carries on working the farm.

Sidney Ware: I am Sidney Ware. My grandfather also worked the windmill; my father was born in Charles' old house, Windmill Farm and my mother came to live in the village when she was 5 years old in



Charles, Marjorie, Raymond & Douglas Pusey

1890. My parents spent the First World War in High Wycombe where I was born but soon after the First World War was over, they came back to Coleshill. I was by then aged about 3 and of course, I have had a home in Coleshill ever since; I have spent 20 years abroad but I still had a home here. That is all you need to know for the present.



Louie Edwards: Well I am Louie Edwards and I was born in 1922 in what is now Old Rafter's; it was then three little cottages. When I was 18 months old, my parents moved into Red Lion Cottages where Mr. and Mrs. Hall now live and of course, that was four little cottages then. Then in 1938 we were told by the Local Council that we were overcrowded and they built those four Council houses in The Bit and we had to move into no. 12. No two ways about it, we just had to go.

I am supposed to be retired but still find plenty to do. I am very pleased to be here tonight and hope I can answer all your questions. I was born in Coleshill and was married here and I now live in Hill Meadow; so I have lived here all my life.

Ruby May: Well, it is nice to be here. When Mrs. Bungey asked me I said "Oh dear" but I am very pleased I said yes. I was born in Wembley and I came to live in Coleshill when I was 4 years old when my father was in the First World War and my granny Appleby rented us a little cottage down Barracks Hill; Amber Cottages no. 8. I came to live there when I was 4 years old and I went to school at Coleshill, of course. I married and I have lived here ever since and that is a good many years ago. We have been married nearly 55 years. We had a happy childhood and we have had a happy married life and I would not want to leave Coleshill now. We had thought about it, because our house perhaps and the garden are too big but people say when they come to see us, when they look out the back at all the fields, "How can you leave this Ruby?" so we do not think that we shall now. Thank you very much anyway.



Windmill Farm



Magpie Lane 1926

Mr. Sadler: Well it is up to you good people to start asking questions. Could we have the first question please?

Question: I would like to ask Mr. Pusey, who were the landowners, who were the tenant farmers? Was his father a landowner or was he paying rent or something on the land on which his father farmed?

Mr. Pusey: My father was a tenant farmer. He rented quite a bit of land in the village from various people. There was the Rushymead land and we farmed that; most of the Coleshill House land and the Windmill and the land around that. He also later on farmed Bowers Farm which my brother and I farmed until a few years ago.

My brother died in 1943.

Question: When your father farmed was that the Dockers or the Drakes or who?

Mr. Pusey: No, we did not farm them. Most of ours was Coleshill House, the Healey-Hutchinsons there; Rushymead was, of course, built by Mr. Forbes; Bowers Farm belonged to the Lawson Estates.

Question: Mr. Forbes was a First World War chap, wasn't he, he built Rushymead during or after the war.



Mr. Pusey: He built Rushymead just after the war. Previous to that it belonged to Mr. Thomas Howland who was a hotelier in London and the house apparently was a square brick place which was an eyesore [I thought it absolutely atrocious] so he pulled the whole thing to the ground and built Rushymead. That was just after the 1914-1918 War.

Question: The story was that he planted the trees so that his wife who was mentally ill, could come from the Virginia Water mental place and walk round without being seen by anybody.

Mr. Pusey: Yes that was the idea; her son was killed during the war and she took the phone message and was never the same again. She used to come down quite a bit [for a few] weeks and then she had to go back again; but that was the idea. You could see them walking arm in arm around the estate.



Charles Pusey & friends

Question: He survived until after the Second War, did he not?

Mr. Pusey: Oh yes, that is when the estate was sold.

Mrs. Allen: When did Coleshill House lose its grounds and become Chase Close?

Mr. Pusey: Well that was in the 1950s, after I left Coleshill.

Mrs. Edwards: Chase Close was the kitchen garden to Coleshill House.

Mr. Sadler So you can remember when Chase Close was built?

Panel: Oh yes, in the 1950s - 1957.

Mrs. Chevenix-Trench: Can you tell us when the windmill was last working?



Charles Pusey moving Hill Meadow 1930

Mr. Pusey: Yes, my father was the last person to use it and that was about 1907, the year before I was born.

Dr. Helps: How much did your father charge to take us to the station, I cannot remember? - It was a wonderful service.

Mr. Pusey: I think it was about 3s 6d or 4 shillings. If you had a closed carriage or brougham you would get an extra payment.

Question: Was the water tower built when you were children?

Mr. Pusey: That was built just before the First World War.

Mrs. Edwards: We had heard that German prisoners of war helped to build it. My Mother told me.

Mr. Pusey: They had special constables to guard it during the First World War. One gentleman who my questioner may remember - he was parading one day; they heard him shouting - he was brandishing his truncheon at a tree and they told him to halt before he shot himself. Anyway he attacked this tree with his truncheon.



1966

Where Mr. Urry's house now stands

Mrs. Pearce: Do you remember the nissan huts going up for the prisoners of war because when we took our farm just 40 years ago there were these nissan huts, we were surrounded by them?



Victory Parade 1918

Mr. Pusey: That was Hodgemoor in the Second World War. I was away then, of course.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, that was Brentford Grange Farm. Where Mr. Swerling's house now stands is where the German Prisoner of War Camp was during the Second World War; they spread out towards your farm.

Mrs. Pearce: Well, all the nissan huts were both in top and bottom Hodgemoor.

Mrs. Edwards: Of course, all through Hodgemoor the army was stationed, all through the war; we had American forces stationed there for a time but it was not good enough for them so they moved on and the Middlesex Regiment and the 51st Highland Division was there for a time, all through Hodgemoor. At the end of the war they used them for the Polish Army.

Mrs. May: When these soldiers came back from the war, we used to go up to sew the badges on their tunics - it was a great experience.

Mrs. Edwards: We also had a search-light detachment in the cricket meadow during the war - the Royal Engineers.

Question: Apart from Coleshill House and the house at Rushymead, when you were a child was it basically an agricultural village? When did it become populated by a proportion of middle class people either retiring here or working in London? My recollection of it goes back to the mid 1930s when there were still large numbers of people working on the land, large numbers of cottages in Coleshill for 5 shillings a week or less but already, it was obviously full of people who had country houses - weekend houses? What was it like when you were a child?



Mr. Pusey: Well it was a truly rural village. Most of the people worked on the land, a few worked out at Winchmore Hill in chair factories but mostly they were all working on the land and all the cottages of course were occupied by these people like the Eves and the Wingroves, for generations. Rushymead of course, Mr. Howland built that before the war but Coleshill House that goes back quite a few years. The Wetherbys, the secretary for the Race-course Association, they moved there and they had a stud and trained horses there. Going on to the Rosary, there were the Miss Fawcets who lived there. An old gentleman lived there; he had five or six daughters - he kept them all at home so he could protect them. They were dear old ladies and they lived in the village until they died.

Mrs. Edwards: That is where Mr. Curling now lives.

Question: When your father farmed around the village, can you recall in those days when he farmed it, how many men he had working.



Mr. Pusey in Stock Yard 1940

Mr. Pusey: Well, he farmed other land; we milked somewhere around 25 cows; we supplied the village with milk and we supplied the village with coal, so I suppose ten or twelve men most of the time. It was mainly dairy and of course, the horses.

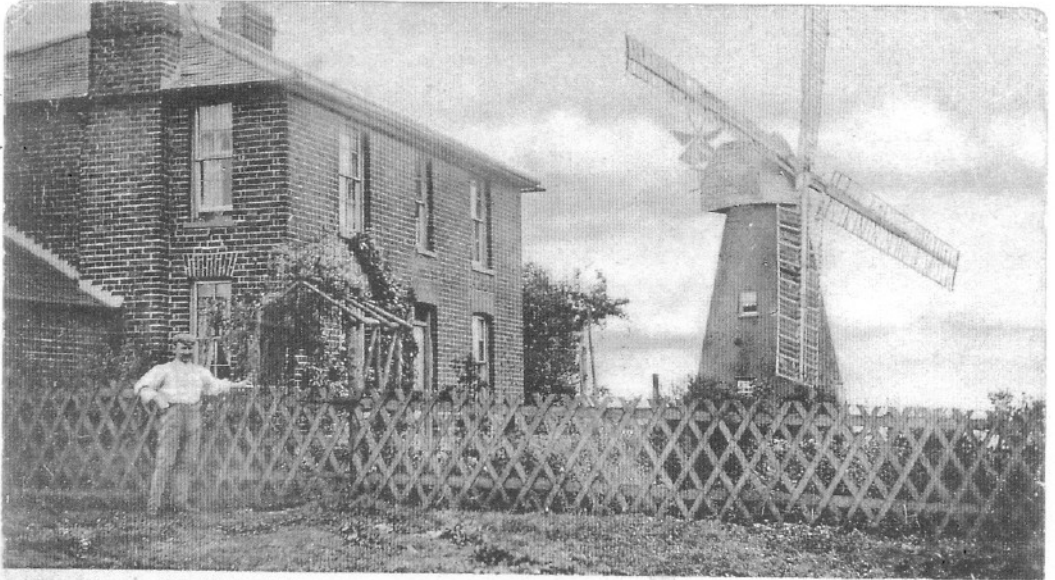
Ruby May: Your father had a brake: your father used to take us on Sunday School outings. We used to go to Bricket Wood with the Coleshill Chapel Sunday School and some of the older children had to get out of the brake to walk up Scotts Hill - that very steep hill on the way to Watford. That is how we used to spend our day on the Sunday School outing with the Chapel which has been closed 15 years now. In those days we had to go to Sunday School three times a day, morning, afternoon and evening for evening service.

Dr. Helps: Ruby, that is why my brother and I had to cut out so many things for Miss Taylor.

Ruby May: Yes, Miss Lucy Taylor. Both her maids were Sunday School teachers, Miss Bryant and Miss Violet Batt. We used to go up to Porch House and have our rehearsals for the Sunday School anniversary and concerts; Miss Lucy Taylor was really a wonderful person - she did a lot for the village. We used to have an anniversary every year where we all used to recite and sing and then we would have a tea party on the Monday, outside our little Chapel and then we would go down to Mr. Pusey's field to have games and there was always a big jar of sweets and the superintendent used to scramble them on the ground and you had to get what you could - because some of the boys were hefty, you know.

Question: Mr. Pusey's field was the general play ground for the village.

Mrs. Sadler: Which was Mr. Pusey's field then - can you talk about Mr. Pusey's field?



The Windmill, Coleshill.

Mr. Pusey: By the windmill, the field below the windmill where the bungalow is now. Of course, that was not there then.

Question: Was the common in those days the same as it is now?

Mrs. Edwards: No, no, we lived on there as children.

Mr. Ware: It was fenced in those days, in the early days, at least down the windmill roadside.

Mr. Pusey: Sidney's uncle used to graze his sheep on there two or three times a year. The village blacksmith used to have his horses there. The people at Lands Farm used to graze their cattle there.

Sidney Ware: Somebody, a Bill Lane used to graze his goats there.

Mrs. Edwards: And the man from the Forge, the blacksmith, he had his pony there.

Sidney Ware: No, it was mostly heather and low bushes, small bushes - no big bushes like we have today.



Mrs. May: When we used to live in the Barracks every house in the ten cottages had just one cold water tap and we all used to have a clothes line on the common for our washing to be hung on. The lady who used to live in the Old Parsonage, she had about four or five silver birches put up with a fence round to hide the washing. We only paid 5 shillings a week then. It was a lot of money in those days; anyway we had a lovely childhood.

Question: Is the well still there.

Mr. Pusey: Yes, it is still there.

Dr. Helps: I was going to ask you about Jacob's Well.

Mr. Pusey: Yes, well I think Mr. Smith is looking after it now of course.

Mrs. Smith: Was there another well down nearer to the windmill itself behind what is now Lea House?

Mr. Smith: Described to us as watering hole no. 8. Can you tell me what the other seven were?



What is now Peggy Gow's house

Mr. Ware: Where Mr. Wright lives at Jubilee Cottage - there was a well where his garage is now.

Mr. Pusey: Most of the cottages had got a well. There was one at the top of the common where the well was never dry. There was always water in it. The old people who used to live in the cottages at the bottom used to walk up there every day with a couple of buckets before they went to work in the morning.

Sidney Ware: There was also a well outside your kitchen window Mrs. Smith where we used to get our water with a pump when I lived there. In my opinion it was much better than the water works water.

Mrs. Chevenix-Trench: What about the well at Windmill Farm - when was that last working because when we came here in 1954 we tried to work it and we could not?

Mr. Pusey: It was not working in my day but we used to draw water out by a bucket to water the cattle but now we have got mains water.

Question: The water tower was built about 1912. Do you remember when the water tower at the corner of Tower Road and the Main Road was built?

Mr. Pusey: Some where about 1912.

Question: Jeffrey Morris' father worked on it, building it in 1912; so do you remember that?

Mr. Pusey: Yes, I remember that.

Dr. Helps: To supply water to Coleshill House wasn't it - the Wetherbys and Forge House.

Mr. Pusey: Oh no, it was because they had not got enough pressure in Beaconsfield - still essential today.

Dr. Helps: There were a great many wells in Coleshill. Why was the well opposite you called Jacobs Well?

Mr. Pusey: In the meadow in front of, we used to call it the Rosary there was a stream that has always run and I still think it does today. We used to just stick a pipe in the back and it used to water all the cabbages.

Question: I think there was a well in the cricket field as well wasn't there?

Mr. Pusey: There was.

Question: Let me just ask Mr. Pusey about Chapel and Church because there was a Baptist Chapel. How long did they survive?

Mr. Pusey: The lady can tell you better than I can.

Mrs. Edwards: The Chapel was older than the Church but the Chapel was closed about 15 years ago.

Dr. Helps: Somebody told me that it was Winchmore Hill Church that was originally a Chapel. The little church at Winchmore Hill my grandmother and great aunt bought it from the Chapel people to turn it into a Church of England Church for a few bob I think.

Question: When somebody was talking about Sunday School, was that run by the Church or run by the Chapel?

Mr. Pusey: There were two Sunday Schools. The Church had one and the Chapel had one. We used to go up to the Church and the Chapel people went the other way into the Chapel.

Mrs. Edwards: All friends together.

Mr. Pusey: I used to love to go to the Chapel all that singing, very beautiful singing and the pews were full every Sunday.

Question: What time did the services start?

Sidney Ware: In the Church we had an 8 o'clock service, an 11 o'clock service, afternoon Sunday School and a 6 o'clock service in the evening. The choirboys had to attend each service and we had to go every Thursday night to choir practice and if you did not go the Schoolmaster was also the organist and Choirmaster and we had to have a good excuse on the Monday morning in school if we were not in the choir on Sunday.

Question: How many people were in the choir?

Sidney Ware: We had upwards of 30 in the choir then. The two front seats of the congregation as now on either side were both occupied by the choir ladies and small boys. The ladies choir were not robed in those days.



The Merry Thoughts 1926

Mr. Pusey: But they were in my day. They had Little Red Ridinghood Cloaks. They had a very good choir then, the Schoolmaster and the organist and we had a lot of practice, we used to sing quite a lot of anthems. We sang the Messiah and The Crucifixion. Mrs. Stoner came too and said it was the best she had ever heard it sung out of London.

Question: In what year did Mr. Stubbings cease to be the Headmaster of the school and the organist at the Church?

Mrs. Edwards: I think Mr. Stubbings left in 1932 because I was at school the last year he was there and then Mr. Young came to be Headmaster.

Question: I know about Mr. Stubbings because he lived close to me at Springfield Cottage. I can remember in 1955, Mr. Stubbings held an exhibition here at the hut which was on this site, of water colours and his pastels and he sold the lot at 3 guineas a time and he was in his 80s and then about two months later he died. I thought this a very satisfactory end, having been in the village since about 1903 or something.

Mr. Pusey: I went to school in 1912 and he was there then. He was a Sussex man.

Question: Yes, he came down from London about 1903 or 1905. He did these excellent water colours, pastels of the surrounding countryside; he went on doing it until he was 82 or 83; he soldiered on - and then died.

Mr. Valentine: On a different subject, where did people shop in those days? There was a shop here, was there?

Mr. Pusey: Yes, not the ones that you have here now.

Mr. Valentine: What did it sell?

Mr. Pusey: Everything. That was more or less the main shop and then there was an old lady named Turner, Kitty Turner who had a shop.

Mrs. Edwards: It is where Glebe House is now.

Mr. Pusey: Behind the row of cottages and she used to sell paraffin and sweets.

Mr. Valentine: Did you get your food there?



Mr. Pusey: We could get anything really in the village, the butcher used to call; the baker used to call; the fishmonger used to call once a week.

Question: What was the pub like?

Mr. Pusey: Nice.

Mrs. Edwards: I lived next door.

Mr. Urry: Was there another public house in the village?

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, where Mr. and Mrs. McNeilly now live, Forge House, that was The Fluer de Lys.

Mr. Sadler: When did that cease to be a pub?

Mrs. Edwards: I cannot remember, it was a long time ago - in the 1940s I would think.

Mr. Ware: Also many years ago there were various old pubs in the village too. We were talking about Kitty Turner's shop, it has since been pulled down, it was at the back where Glebe House now stands. There were two houses, semi-detached facing the common and a little tiny cottage behind them. I understand at one time, the two houses were two pubs, The Black Horse and The White Horse. That was many years ago.



Mr. Sadler: Did you go into Amersham?

Mrs. Edwards/Mr. Pusey: We used to walk to Amersham.

Mr. Sadler: Was there public transport of any sort? How did one travel about?

Mrs. Edwards/Mr. Pusey: We had to walk.

Mr. Sadler: There was no public bus of any sort?

Mr. Ware: Oh yes, later there was a very good bus service by a man named Clott. He ran a small bus, much smaller than present buses.

Dr. Helps: Those little red ones?



Mr. Ware: Yes, and he ran from Chesham to Beaconsfield and back, all day long.

Mr. Pusey: He was not very reliable because if he saw anyone playing cricket on the village green, he would stop for a while.

Mr. Ware: But he would pick you up anywhere and put you down anywhere on route; there were no set stops as such. A better bus service than we have now!

Mr. Sadler: Was life hard in those days - during the depression?

Mrs. Edwards: Well it was for the poorer classes - very hard. My grandmother lived at Hertfordshire Lodge; that is where my mother was born and when she was 8 years old her father died; he had worked for a man called Mr. Boge who lived at Hertfordshire House and the day after he died, he came to my grandmother and said that she had to get

out because he had to employ another man in her husband's place. So she got out. The cottage by the Red Lion that I eventually went to live in was empty; she went to Mr. Pusey and asked him if he would move her few belongings from Hertfordshire Lodge to Red Lion Cottage because she just had to get out; that is where she went - it was very hard; she was left a widow. We did not get all the benefits and things that you get today; in fact, you got nothing. She used to go out to the fields and pick the stones and my mother went with her picking the stones with which they used to make the roadways. She went to Bowers Farm to do things like that because they just had to, I mean she could not survive on a shilling a week or something. It was not much but that would be at the beginning of the century and it was hard.

Ruby May: My father was Louie's brother and my father was born in the Lodge and he lived there until he was 21 and of course, grandfather was only 44 when he passed away and granny had a rough time.

Mrs. Edwards: They used to take in washing and things like that and some were cleaning houses. My grandmother also took in boys from Doctor Barnados Home and she would have them from the age of about 7 until 11; she would bring them up and get paid so much for looking after them but when they were 11 they had to go back to Doctor Barnados Home and then they were sent abroad to Canada and Australia and these new countries that were just beginning. But it broke her heart to part with them and several of them did keep in touch with her through the years but that is how she did it, just to get a bit extra.

Mr. Pusey Yes, she had a very hard life. She had a big family of her own to look after.



The Higgs Family outside Red Lion Cottage

Mrs. Edwards: There were 4 boys there that she brought up, then she had to give them back to Doctor Barnados. But those boys had a very hard life when they went back to Doctor Barnados Homes and were sent out to Canada and Australia working on those farms when they were just beginning. It is hard for us to realise.

Question: I remember a Mr. Norris who lived in the house I now live in; he must have been born in about 1880 or so; every time some bit of fence was taken down, every rusty nail was carefully taken out and straightened to use again. The cottage had a door at the foot of the stairs to prevent the heat being wasted by going upstairs into the bedrooms. What was it like to be an agricultural labourer in Bucks around the turn of the century right up to the First World War? It must have been absolutely dreadful.

Mr. Pusey It was alright under the circumstances.

Question: Coleshill House had seven full time gardeners in those days.

Mr. Pusey He used to work with my father and he got asthma very badly and I would see him leaning on the bin, in the stable, absolutely gasping for breath. But he had to work because he had to get some money. Eventually his wife and he bought the pony and cart; well at least, I think my mother gave it to him. He used to go round with his wife collecting the washing. His wife did the washing and he helped her with it and then he would go round and deliver it back again to Healy Hutchinson at the big house.



The Pusey Family 1910

Mr. Lawrence: Can we go back to Coleshill House for a minute and Chase Close? The house we live in I think, is in Chase Close but I think it was a squash court. I wonder whether you knew when that was built and what you remember about it.

Mr. Pusey: I remember it being a squash court.

Mr. Lawrence: When might it have been built?

Mr. Ware I think it was the Healy Hutchinsons. It was before the last war. I do not remember it being built.

Question: You remember it was a squash court?

Mr. Ware: Oh yes. I used to visit the Healy Hutchinsons quite a lot; they had a son my age but he was killed in the war.

Question: Did you ever play squash?

Mr. Ware: I played tennis.

Question: Did you every play squash in there?

Mr. Ware: No. They had a tennis court behind the house.

Question: Where was the tennis court?

Dr. Helps: There was a tennis court at Coleshill Lodge too; Mr. Holland had a squash court where Mr. Adams lives now.

Question: The squash court was definitely there immediately after the war, so it must have been built before the war.

Mr. Pusey: It was built before the war because Mr. Holland was not there very long.

Question: Rather a gloomy question but will you tell me what happened in the village when somebody died?

Mr. Ware: My uncle was the undertaker. Where Mr. and Mrs. Smith live now, he was Harry Muckley; he was my mother's uncle - he brought my mother up from when she was 5 years old, he was the local builder and undertaker. He had quite an extensive builders' yard; he employed two carpenters, a plumber, a bricklayer, a labourer and a painter and he virtually did all the building work in the village. He built houses as well as repaired them; he was also the undertaker and he made the coffins in his workshop. He did not buy coffins in. He had a bier and he pulled the coffins on the bier; anybody who died in the vicinity, I think possibly my mother was the last person to make use of his bier. His own men dug the graves and he used to walk in front of the bier in morning dress; his painter, his carpenter and

his plumber etc. were the pall-bearers; the coffins were pushed on the bier along the village road.



Littlelands

Question: I think Mrs. Dean who lives in The Bit worked there; she left school at 13 and she started her first job there often working with the coffins and doing the linings.

Mr. Ware: Yes, she came to us. We had her as a maid/servant.

Question: Yes, she helped the lady of the house get dressed and get her cup of tea and when she did not want her, she went into help with the linings of the coffins.

Mr. Ware: That is right that would be my mother.

Question: If you were "Chapel" where were you buried?

Mr. Ware: In the Churchyard.

Mrs. Edwards: Anybody could be buried there, that was consecrated after the First World War. If you read on the memorial, it will tell you. "This Churchyard was consecrated in memory of those who were killed in the Great War".

Mr. Ware: Yes, Chapel people were buried in the Churchyard.

Question: The Churchyard of the Church?

Mrs. Edwards: Yes for the village not just the Church.

Question: I remember reading somewhere about people having to be carried in the coffins all the way down to Amersham.

Mrs Edwards: That was before the Churchyard was consecrated.

Question: Coleshill once upon a time made tiles or pots. Was this in anybody's living memory - was this still going on. It must have stopped when - in the 19th century?

Dr. Helps: At the model cottages, there is an old brick kiln at the back - they were good bricks.

Mrs. Edwards: Before the new road was built there was a farm by the water tower and of course, that was called Kiln Farm. Probably out behind there.

Mr. Pusey Oh there were big pits.

Dr. Helps: I think it is terrible that those cottages were



eliminated opposite the water tower. Funnily enough the reason why Robert Shaw and Mary Ure came to Porch House was because Mary Ure starred in the film "Sons and Lovers" and the cottage scenes were shot in the cottages just opposite the water tower.

Ruby May: Yes, well the road goes now where the farm stood.

Question: I remember Mr. Norris saying that when the foundations were dug for the water tower, that the soil was tipped into one of the old kilns in Kiln Farm.

Mr. Pusey Yes, they ran a small gauge railway across the road and we had the tipping trucks; we had a man working for us, with a horse leading these things across the road and I remember them saying that apparently one of these trucks tipped over and went down in the well - in the hole and pulled the horse with it. I think they managed to get the horse out alive but he was seriously injured and I forget who it was, one of the boys working in the village, his mother came along to my father and said do not send that boy there any more. They were big chalk pits; there was a lot of chalk there.

Question: It was said that this particular kiln was so large you could drive a cart and horse into the kiln.

Mr. Pusey: That is an old saying.

Question: Was the pond used for anything commercial?

Mr. Pusey No, only watering. The blacksmith used to use it to cool his car and his vehicles and that sort of thing.

Mr. Ware: All the farm horses were watered there.

Mrs. Edwards: It was not all built up with grass banks like it is now. You could walk in one end and out the other. It had a gravel floor.



Friars Vane, formerly Lands Farm

Mrs. Sadler: I wanted to ask about the school. How many children there were and the areas they came from, whether it was just Coleshill or whether they came from Winchmore Hill and outlying villages. What age they started school, what age did they go through to and about secondary education? A very broad subject of education.

Mrs. Edwards: We started at 5 years old and then we left at 14 years old. Mr. Stubbins was a marvellous schoolmaster; he taught my mother and my father.

Mrs. May: I have got a book, a prize my father had in 1897 and his beautiful writing in this book is lovely. The children used to come from Winchmore Hill to Coleshill School and they used to bring their lunch but we were lucky because we were able to go home to have our lunch. I always remember one poor girl from Winchmore Hill having her lunch in the lobby one day and she got a big lump of solid rice pudding; I shall never forget that - I can see her eating it now. I used to think poor girl and I was lucky enough to go home and get a drop of hot soup or something.

Mr. Ware: And it really was a pitiful sight to see these small 5 years, 6 year olds, 7 year olds having walked from Winchmore Hill on a snowy day; some did not have shoes even. We had a roaring fire in the school which they used to stand in front of to dry themselves. The steam used to rise from their clothes. They were provided with foot slippers. They walked to school every morning and back home every evening.

Question: I must admit that one of the delights I have of Coleshill from the early days was going to the top of Barracks Hill and only seeing one set of foot prints and one set of traffic tyres going down.

Question: Barracks Hill used to be a flint road at one time?

Mr. Ware: Yes, they all used to be flint roads.

Mrs. May: I remember when I lived in Barracks Hill there were about 15 to 20 children living there then when I was little - all ages - and we used to have some marvellous times on the common. When we used to go out along the road, you would not be able to get run over with a car. We used to play hop scotch and skipping and spinning tops and all sorts of games. We all had a hoop. The boys had an iron hoop and the girls had a wooden hoop coming down the road.

Dr. Helps: Your brother Dennis and Sidney were the great experts at standing still on bicycles.

Mrs. May: They used to make trollies with four wheels and come from the top of Barracks Hill right down to the bottom. I remember seeing your grandfather who lived at the bottom cottage and my brother only said about it the other week - He said can you remember when we came down the hill and knocked poor old Grampy Higgs down?

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TOURING BUCKS VILLAGES

WHEN MEN FOUGHT FOR A WIFE

Peaceful Coleshill Was Once A Village of Battles

WHICH is the most beautiful village in Buckinghamshire? From the point of view of scenery, there must be few to surpass Coleshill, that tiny hamlet on the hill overlooking Amersham.

Coleshill can boast of a history which is not only romantic, but thrilling. It was the village of battles.

Dim stories of the far-off days, when many a man fought his opponent for the hand of a beautiful maiden, are still told. Coleshill was the place where many of these fights took place. The reason? It is a long story, but the shortest way of explaining is, that until the end of the last century Coleshill was in the county of Hertfordshire, while Amersham, a mile or so below, was in Bucks. As far as it is known, the village formed an island with the county of Bucks all round it.

Home of "He" Men

It was here that the men with grievances used to congregate and fight out their battles because they were out of the reach of the police, and also because the village was little known. In fact, up to this day there exist places where the battles were fought, and they are known by their names. For instance, Gore Hill, the steep road leading to Amersham, derives its name because of the terrible battles that took place on the top of the rise. Bloody Field and Deadman Deane are other places.

The village was the home of the "he" man, and residents still living can remember the times when men had their heads and bones smashed, and it was not uncommon for the fights to last for days, the contestants putting on a "once-nightly show," until one side or the other called a truce.

While they were not fighting the young ones wooed, for Coleshill could boast of some fine young men and women. There was great ceremony if one of their ladies was wooed by a young man from a "strange place" (meaning another village). Should this have occurred at the beginning of the last century then the

Nightingales are rare in Bucks, but they are heard at Coleshill during the months of April and May, all night, and Mr. Stubbings informed me that he had often played Coleshill Church organ, where he is the organist, and so induced them to sing. His method is to open the church door in the evening and play quietly for a short time. Presently, the birds in the trees leave off their bed-time song, and the nightingales take up the strain.

Whilst on the subject of art, it is worth mentioning that our well-known cartoonist, Tom Webster, of *Daily Mail* fame, stayed in the village for some months, and Mr. H. Hodgson, the keeper of the Royal Academy, lived at "The Larches" some four years ago.

Edmund Waller

It is said that art and poetry go hand-in-hand. It is so of Coleshill, for Edmund Waller, the poet of Bucks fame, was born on March 3rd, 1605, at Stocks Place, one of several of the half-timbered cottages of the Tudor style in the village. To-day there still stands the oak tree under which, it is said, the poet wrote several of his lyrics. Waller came of a Buckinghamshire family, his mother being of the Hampdens and related to Oliver Cromwell. After entering Parliament and having a long career with both the Royalists and the Roundheads, he settled down in Coleshill, saying, "He would be glad to die like a stag where he was roused." However his wish was not fulfilled, and he died at Beaconsfield in 1687 and is buried in the churchyard.

There is another literary association at Coleshill, and that is with the writer Thomas Ellwood. Ellwood, who was Milton's private secretary, lived in a small cottage at Larkin's Green, a part of the village. It is interesting to note that in 1665, he was instrumental in securing Milton's cottage, Chalfont St. Giles, for the home of Milton during the time that the "pestilence" was in London.

Easy! (if Sober)

the beginning of the last century then the ~~leads of the village went to the maiden's~~ home and performed an old custom known as "rough music." This consisted of the beating of drums and noisy implements, which continued until the wooer in question came forth from the house and vowed to fall in with their customs. This scheme usually worked. But should the visitor refuse the request, he was asked to meet the champion fighter of the village on the green, and he was always assured of a good audience.

Gore Hill

However, all that is gone, and to-day Coleshill has fallen into the ways of all respectable villages.

I drove my car up Gore Hill and, on reaching the top, stopped to admire the beautiful view, for that is the thing that it is most noted for. Lying in the bottom of the valley was Amersham, with its church tower lighted up by the afternoon sun. Away on the distant hills could be seen Ivinghoe Beacon, while further to the right lay the Dunstable Downs and the hills close to Bedford. Truly, a beautiful sight!

One reason why the village is not well-known is because it lies off the main road. Turning sharp by the gigantic water tower, I approached it, passing some more wonderful scenery. At the far end of the village street I was able to get another glimpse of the country. Penn Church was easily distinguished, and the Oxfordshire hills around Nettlebed and Henley were visible. On the other side I paused long to admire the view. Away to the South could be seen a favourite haunt of mine, the Hogs Back, near Guildford. To form some idea of the distance, I was told that it was possible to see the Crystal Palace in South London on a clear day. At the point on which I was standing, one worthy told me that I was 560 feet above sea level.

Haunt of Artists

For many years Coleshill has been the haunt of artists, and many fine landscapes can be seen all over the country which were painted in Coleshill. My first call was on Mr. F. Stubbings, the well-known Bucks artist.

Mr. Stubbings is always painting or sketching, and I spent a pleasant hour looking over many of the views of the district that he had executed. A farm by the roadside at Booker, a view of Amersham from the hills, thickly wooded country, Amersham High Street—with the fair and the Town Hall, the gardens of many of the houses in the district, and a hundred-and-one other views were among them. Mr. Stubbings has done every variety of painting, and he informed me that he had just completed his eightieth painting this year. We strolled out into the fields and an hour on a sketch of Amersham from the hillside taught me more about art than did my art master at school in four years.

Lady: (H. JONES)

In a lyric written by Ellywood, which was called "Direction to my friend, inquiring the way to my house," he says:

Two miles from Beaconsfield, upon the road,
To Amersham, just where the way grows broad.

A little spot there is, called Larkins Green,
Where, on a bank, some fruit trees may be seen.

In the midst of which, on the sinister hand,
A little cottage, covertly doth stand.

"So ho," the people out, and then inquire—
For Hunger Hill—it lies a little higher.

But if the people should from home be gone
Hike up the bank, some twenty paces on

And, at the orchard's end thou may'st perceive

Two gates together hung. The nearest leave,
The furthest take, and straight the hill

ascend:
The path leads to the house where dwells thy friend.

Up to the present day Larkin's Green is the name given to that part of the village of Coleshill near the Magpies Inn, while the cottage in which Ellywood lived, still stands. Hunger Hill is now known as Ongar Hill, and in a house near by Oliver Cromwell is said to have stayed two nights.

Missing Church

There is still another mystery about Coleshill, and that is its church. The present structure has only been built for the past seventy years, but on an old map of the village, dated 1620, I saw that a church was in existence. Where the original one has gone nobody knows, and no records can be found to trace it. However there is one clue, and that is the field called Chapel Field, and some years ago, while digging operations were being carried out in it, the foundations of an ancient church were found.

School in a Cottage

Before leaving the village I had a talk with Mr. F. Shrimpton, who is 88 years of age, and the oldest inhabitant in Coleshill. Mr. Shrimpton told me that he was born in the village, and in those days there was no village school. "We had to go to a small cottage down the road, where we were taught to read and write," he said.

Mr. Shrimpton told me that at one time there were five or six public-houses in the village to serve about 300 people. Mr. Shrimpton can remember when the church was built at Coleshill, while his memory carries him back to the time when the famous Coleshill windmill was erected, about eighty years ago. It is now used as a Girl Guides' headquarters.

"We had to walk in those days," said Mr. Shrimpton, "and I have often walked into Wycombe and Rickmansworth." He can remember the days when fighting was common in the village, and Sundays were rough days, there being little regard to the Sabbath. It was not until the coming of the church that order was restored.

"Yes, Coleshill has changed for the good," he said.

L.T.S.