



COMMERCE

range of Enterprises

Enclosure around the village of Coln St Aldwyns started in the early 18th century. Before this the landscape would have looked very different.

Instead of being surrounded by small fields enclosed by hedges or dry-stone walls, there would have been two or three vast open fields divided into strip-holdings with only raised strips of unploughed turf to separate them. The enclosure of Coln St Aldwyns was completed by 1770 when the majority of the land around the village was included in a few large farms. In 1778 there were three listed on the Coln St



Aldwyns Manor estate (now known as the Williamstrip Estate) totalling 1010 acres which included Swyre, Williamstrip and Cockrup Farms. After enclosure the parish's main output was cereal production and sheep-farming. In 1801 over 1000 acres were sown with crops of wheat, barley, oats and turnips. Sheep were kept for their wool and cross-bred in the early 19th century to produce sheep that gave more wool.

The Coln Independent Co-operative Society Ltd

stores opened, on the site of what is now the Coln Stores, in 1875 by a group of enterprising villagers. It became a lifeline for the poorer members of the parish and kept the wolf from the door of many families living in times when wages were low and jobs not always readily available.

One of the first 1000 Co-ops in the country it operated successfully for 80 years, through two World Wars and even opened a branch in Bibury in 1933. The village bakery was situated in one of the outbuildings adjacent to the shop, and in a room next door was the village bath tub, the water being heated by the baker's oven for which the villagers paid 3 old pennies for a bath on a Friday. The story goes that when the charge was increased to 6 pennies they ceased using the facility. It ceased to be a Co-op in 1954.



The Shop, 1937



Apart from farming, the earliest commercial activities in Coln St Aldwyns revolved around the mills. Two mills, to the west of the village, were recorded here in the Domesday Book of 1086 and by 1260 that number had increased to three. By the 15th century Cotswold wool was in great demand and had become an important commodity. The two mills originally recorded were wool mills, however the development of the cotton industry and the beginnings of the

industrial revolution started a decline in the need for wool production and by 1770 the two wool mills had become one corn mill, now called the Upper Mill. It subsequently became a saw-mill in the 1920s which continued in use until 1964. The wood was cut with a large circular saw powered by a water wheel. The third mill recorded by 1260 was at the south eastern end of the village and was called Kemeys's Mill. It was always a corn mill and continued in use until the 1970s.



In the 19th century and well into the early part of the 20th century the village was self-supporting and commercial activities encompassed a wide range of enterprises including a butcher, tailor, dressmaker, chimney sweep and a shoemaker. At one time there were five carpenters, three millers, a baker, a Co-op and Post office, two blacksmiths, a stone mason, a lime-burner and a wood-sawyer.



The carpenter's shop was next to the Manor Farm House and one villager remembers the carpenter making wagons with metal bonds over the wheels: *"He once told me that if the wheel was made right it wouldn't need pins to hold it onto the axle. The bonds were put on red hot after being heated on a big bonfire of wood and shavings. Once the metal was on the wheel, jim would shout "Water, water!"*

The water was then poured on the hot bond and steam would fly around as the bond shrunk onto the wheel."



The carpenter also acted as the local undertaker and next to his carpentry workshop there was a saw pit. A large log would be placed over the pit and two men with a long saw, one in the pit and one above, would cut out the planks for the coffins. Death was very much

a village affair with the laying out of the bodies being done by Mrs Woodcock who doubled as a part-time nanny.



The village even had a laundry which opened in 1912 on the site of what is now Lady Lucy Cottage. Managed by the Williamstrip Estate, it washed for Fairford Hospital, Williamstrip Park, and other local houses. There is still a metal ring in the wall of Lady Lucy Cottage to the left of the front door. A donkey laden



Laundry Ladies, c1950

with dirty laundry from Dean Farm would find its own way to the laundry building where it would be tethered to the ring until the load was washed and dried. It would then be sent on its way back to Dean Farm. The laundry closed in 1955.



To complement the Co-op Stores, the Coln St Aldwyns Farming Co-operative Society

was formed in 1894 at Cockrup Farm. It was chiefly a dairy unit selling produce to the village Co-op store. Labourers employed on the farm had to be members of the Society, therefore having a direct interest in its prosperity. By 1910 it tenanted 575 acres of land and, although it had prospered and was respected for its methods of cultivation and the quality of its stock, it was dissolved in 1918.



The Old Carpentry Yard, 1935

