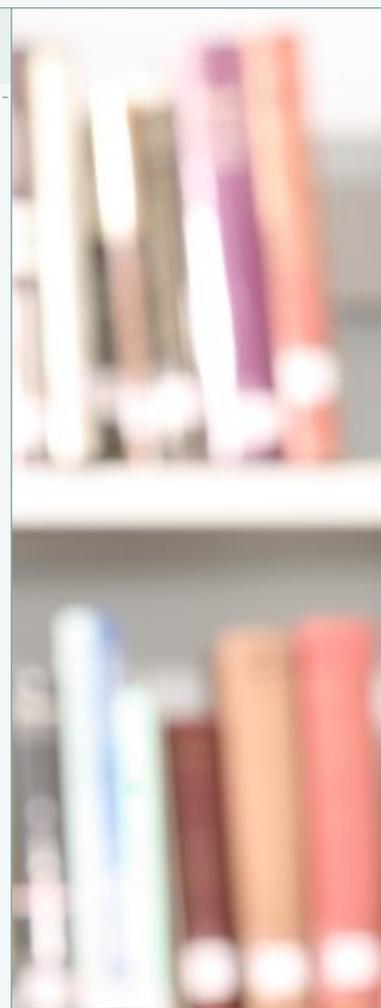


HENSON HERALD

North Staffordshire Press held its inaugural online book festival in June. Over thirty brave souls joined from as far afield as Chennai, southern India, to Carmarthen, Hanley, Stoke, Clayton and Rugeley. Authors and artists showcased their work to an enthusiastic audience and local Sci-Fi writer Sean Armstrong, together with Lee, MD of Abbey Sound Audio, described their audiobook about the Green Girl. Emily Moore, pen name Fox Hat, a graduate from Staffordshire University showed her digital pictures and chatted to a Professor from India about his work. Jolene Modd a successful children's author from Shelton is a campaigner for Epileptics, which is a hidden disability, and talked about her books and life experiences. The themes of the Festival, apart from writers and artists, were based on music, quotes and botanical aspects. A recipe for Elderflower wine was described but unfortunately it was a tea total meeting. A quote was read: A women drove me to drink but I never had the courtesy to thank her.



North Staffordshire Press is planning to hold another online book festival later in the Summer which makes practical sense in this Lockdown. Thanks to the Innovation Hub at Keele and Staffordshire University for support with this venture.



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EGGS OMELETTE ARNOLD BENNETT

Serves 2-3

¼ pint/150ml/2/3 cup of single (light) cream

6oz/175g/6oz smoked haddock, cooked and flaked

4-5 large eggs, separated

2 tbsps/2x15ml spns/2tbsps Cheddar cheese, grated

1 tbspn/1x15ml spn/1 tbspn chives, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

1oz/25g/2 tbsps butter

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 5-6 minutes

Heat the cream gently with the haddock in a medium-sized pan.

Take the pan off the heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly.

Beat in the egg yolks, cheese, chives and seasoning.

Whisk the egg whites into glossy peaks and fold into the haddock mixture.

Melt the butter in an omelette pan, pour in the mixture and cook over a

moderate heat until the base has browned and the omelette has half set.

Place under a fairly hot grill to finish cooking and brown the top.

Serve immediately with sliced tomatoes and a crisp salad.

This recipe comes from:

The New Family Cookbook by Carole Edwards.

CORRESPONDENCE CHESS AND THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM BY JOHN KNEE

The onset of COVID-19 and 'social distancing' has led to the abandonment of normal over-the-board chess play. However a good deal of on-line chess of various kinds has been continuing.

In pre-computer days, players frequently competed against each other by correspondence, and this enabled very strong players to meet without the expense and inconvenience of travelling. After the Second World War, a structure was set in place to enable players to compete for the World Correspondence Championship, the first final of which began in 1950 and was not completed until 1953.

The winner of this final was the Australian, Cecil Purdy, but two British players distinguished themselves. Graham Mitchell came fifth out of fifteen players, just ahead of Gabriel Wood. Mitchell was the only player to defeat Purdy (see game below).

It was revealed much later that Mitchell was Deputy Director General of MI5 during the years 1956-1963, very much a Cold War period. His only superior at MI5 at that time was Roger Hollis. Although Hollis had no reputation as a chess player, his son Adrian (1940-2003) became a Correspondence Chess grandmaster, combining chess with his duties as a Fellow and Tutor of Classics at Keble College, Oxford.

Noted chess players involved in decoding at Bletchley Park during the war included Hugh Alexander, Harry Golombek, and Stuart Milner-Barry, all of whom played regularly for British teams. How many chess players took similar positions for the 'opposition' is not known!

White :- GR Mitchell. Black :- CJS Purdy. 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 O-O 8. c3 d6 9. d4 Bg4 10. Be3 exd4 11. cxd4 Na5 12. Bc2 Nc4

13. Bc1 c5 14. b3 Na5 15. Nbd2 Nc6 16. h3 Bh5 17. g4 Bg6 18. Bb2 Nd7 19. Rc1 Re8 20. Nf1 Bf6 21. Bb1 Qb6 22. dxc5 dxc5 23. Bxf6 Nxf6 24. e5 Red8 25. Qe2 Bxb1 26. exf6 Bd3 27. Qe3 Nb4 28. Qxc5 Qxc5 29. Rxc5 Nxa2 30. Re7 Nb4 31. Ne3 Rac8 32. Rxc8 Rxc8 33. Nd4 gxf6 34. Ndf5 Nc6 35. Rd7 Bxf5 36. Nxf5 a5 37. Nh6+ Kf8 38. Rxf7+ Ke8 39. Rxh7 Nd4 40. Ra7 Nxb3 41. Nf5 Rb8 42. h4 Nc5 43. h5 Nd7 44. h6 Nf8 45. Ng7+ 1-0.

HMS HOOD ON SALE

When HMS Hood joined the British fleet in 1920 she was recognised as a beauty amongst contemporary warships. Fast and powerfully armed, 'The Mighty Hood' soon became a focus of national pride and affection. For some 20 years she graced the Royal Navy's battlecruiser squadron, dutifully streaming the waters of the world to 'show the flag' when and where required. Called up for war service in 1939, her sudden loss on 24 May 1941 came as a severe shock. It was a time when Britain and her distant empire stood alone, while Nazi power held sway in much of western Europe.



Despite being the largest and most prestigious British warship, Hood was classified as a battlecruiser rather than a fully-fledged battleship. Fire power and high speed underpinned her design, with physical protection a lesser priority. She was unable to benefit in full from the punishing lessons of the fighting at Jutland in 1916. After various changes, which complicated and prolonged the construction process, Hood finally entered service with the speed of a battlecruiser and as many heavy guns as a contemporary battleship. However, her scale of protection - though much improved - fell somewhat short of the mark.

HMS Hood had the misfortune to be pitted against two of Germany's most up to date fighting ships, sent on a daring mission to raid the transatlantic war convoys. Their superior gunnery proved decisive, but serious questions remain about how the British interception force was handled during what became known as The Battle of the Denmark Strait. Amongst other matters, this work describes the deployment and loss of HMS Hood during that encounter. It also examines and comments on a number of issues arising, including whether there may have been an 'immune zone' for the ship, within which her part of the engagement could have been fought.

Phil Trigg's book HMS Hood: Fame and Misfortune is on sale now, please contact North Staffordshire Press for more details.

HAVE THE COLLAPSING MUD WALLS OF THE KOLLIHILLS GONE FOR GOOD?

REPORTED BY: T. VASANTHA KUMARAN

Field Visit of February 2020

The purpose of visit during February 21-25, 2020 was two-fold:

One, it was to appraise what has happened in the project since the previous visit in December 2019.

Two, it was to evaluate the work of the past year and a half in the Kollihills (first leg of the visit February 22-24, 2020) and to evaluate the work done in the Theni Revisit 2016-18 (second leg of the visit February 24-25, 2020), as Andrew Barker, who has been involved in the two projects since the beginning as a remote administrator, visited the project sites (6 hamlets of the Kollihills and 3 villages of Theni district) to see for himself the progress made and the status of village development projects funded in both Kollihills and Theni.

The visit involved extensive travel to the project sites as well as meeting the beneficiaries of the village development projects.

Story so far

One of the activities that the Team has been involved with in the last few months before the visit was the renovation of select Government Primary and Tribal Residential Schools. The field investigator Mr. S. Prakasam and Professor N. Subramanian were engaged in overseeing the work in three schools, namely, the Government Tribal Residential (GTR) School at Semmedu, the headquarters of the Kollihills, the Panchayat Union Primary School (PUPS) at Thegavoipatti and the Panchayat Union Primary School at Karumoor Oorpuram, two of the study hamlets in Kollihills.

This was because of a grant of Rupees 300,000 from the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund of M/s Seshasayee Paper and Board Private Limited (SPB) of Erode, and a pooled fund from Dr. R. Joseph, Mr. M. Perumal and TV (that is, myself) amounting to Rupees 80,000. Mr. R. Irudayaraj, Area Manager of Nippon Paints at Tiruchirappalli, brother of Dr. R. Joseph, helped with the purchase of paints and varnishes at a concessional rate at the Namakkal outlet of Nippon Paints. The discount amounted to nearly Rupees 12,000.

Minor repairs, such as damp proofing of the roof and walls, painting and whitewashing the main buildings and the sanitary facilities at the school premises for the PUPSs at Thegavoipatti and Karumoor Oorpuram, and the installation of 18 whiteboards and accessories and the large iron gate, including a gate for the entrance of the GTR were already completed by the February visit. Only the painting of educational panels on the walls of the PUPS at Thegavoipatti was under way at the time of the visit.

While at the Kollihills, the Team visited a Panchayat Union Middle School (PUMS) at Ariyur Solakkadu to have an appraisal as the school needed renovating. The headmaster of the school made a request to the Team for some funding, after seeing the work being done at the two PUPSs at Thegavoipatti and Karumoor Oorpuram. In fact, a request has been made to the management of the Seshasayee Paper and Board Private Limited for Rupees 180,000 for the same purpose. The request is under active consideration by the SPB management.

The Team is extremely grateful to Er. B. Sundar, who was previously the Automation Engineer at the SPB, for his help with the earlier cases: the PUPSs at Thegavoipatti and the GTR at Semmedu. Without his help and recommendation for funding under the CSR, the renovations could not have been accomplished.

The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Kollihills

Our field investigator and local support Mr. S. Prakasam reports that the coronavirus pandemic has spared the Kollihills of its menace. He says that the people of the hills have largely been adhering to the Government guidelines and have also stayed home and safe. The only time they leave their homes is to venture out to procure the essentials, which can mostly be found at the Solakkadu regulated market. Being as isolated as they are, and with restrictions in place on tourists visiting the hills in the last three months or so, the people are mostly safe and there are no untoward incidents of infections.

Looking back at the healthcare infrastructure of the hills, in the initial years of the millennia (2001-03), there was a shortage of medical staff, paramedics and other health workers, but with improvements in transport access to towns in the vicinity of the hills, there has been an increase in access to preventive and curative healthcare for the people of the hills.

A structured schedule of questions was prepared for use in the collection of data on water supply, sanitation and health, taking care to gather information on personal, community and food hygiene and good practices in the tribal community. This survey was conducted with 70 people from the villages, with 5 each to a Nadu so that all Nadus are covered in the process. This survey was done during the months of October 2001 to July 2002, when the team was going around collecting information through participatory rural/reflective appraisals as well.

Health and health care were somewhat of a casualty in the Kollihills, with no adequate facilities being available for most of the interior hamlets. The 70-odd hamlets that are within reach of the access roads, especially in the three Nadus of the hills (Valavanthi Nadu, Devanur Nadu and Thinnanur Nadu), had better access to health care.

Yet in these hamlets, the availability of health care was not instant, nor was it timely. Some sort of service was available, which made the area better off than others. Because of the bus facilities, the people of these hamlets could get to the nearest towns, such as Namakkal, Rasipuram and Mullukurichi for emergencies and for treatment of long term illnesses.

The presence of a primary health centre did not mean that all primary care was freely available, as the doctors and paramedics were not always available. But the PHC has done commendable work in taking censuses several times in the last two decades (1981-2001). Some of this data was used in a study to describe and explain the facts of life, livelihoods, biodiversity and food security in the Kollihills.

Healthcare and Development Infrastructure Access

In the whole of the Kollihills, the space economy is characterised by a concentration of all developmental infrastructures in Semmedu, a hamlet of Valavanthinadu and the headquarters of the development block. Valavanthinadu is characterized by greater access to infrastructure and is prone to greater changes in the attitude of the tribe, acceptance of new ideas and innovative methods of doing things, particularly the cultivation of crops.

Knowledge of Medicinal Plants

There are at least 10 people practising medicine. Some specialise in treating particular diseases. Others are considered good for treating animals. Diseases ranging from fever, body pain, paralysis, skin ailments, and sexually transmitted diseases are commonly treated. Contraceptives and abortifacients are some people's speciality. Family holds the knowledge and it is transmitted from father to son and son to grandson. During treatment, the patient is subjected to mantric healing practices (of mantras), which form part of their treatment, in addition to the herbal medicines. For ethical and strategic reasons, the names of the plants used and their formulations have not been recorded, hence no specific information could be given on the species and the formulations. But the fact remains that the community has an overwhelming knowledge of the herbs present in their surroundings and have developed a mechanism to treat several ailments, successfully.

Food and Income Security

Towards the end of the visit to the Kollihills, Andrew and TV had a long discussion on the accomplishments and successes of the Revisit Project and discussed what future course of action should be taken. The discussion finally veered round to a third Revisit focussing on food and income security of the people of the Kollihills. It was agreed that TV would develop a proposal for the third phase on the food and income security of the tribe, focussing on the 6 hamlets (Kulivalavu, Thegavoipatti and Paravaaru of Ariyur Nadu; and Karumoor, Karumoor Oorpuram and Pallathuvalavu of Valappur Nadu).

Food and income security and biodiversity are the two main aspects of human survival, and the human experience of them in the traditional and tribal society could be a welcome addition. This focus would hopefully usher in 'new perspectives and new methodologies', as well as enriching the knowledge of the human experience in space and time, as we take both a spatial and a temporal view of food and income security of the Kollihills, using the six hamlets as a case in point again.

Story So Far

From the information the Team has gathered in the months after the visit (March-April 2020), most of the hill population is highly vulnerable to food and income insecurity, especially since they have been forced into lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic at the end of March 2020.

After the year 2000, interventions from international agencies like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Bank, insisted that States should withdraw welfare programmes such as the PDS, thus restricting access of PDS to a small proportion of the population. This initiative was outlined in the State of Tamil Nadu, where all ration cards were to be converted into a monthly income of more than Rupees 5,000, which would form the new 'H' (a honorary) category, which would mean that most households in the State would no longer be able to access the PDS (ration and fair price shops).

This has been viewed as a threat to the food security of the Kollihills, which is mainly dependent on the national and state supply of food grains (rice and wheat, also millets such as ragi), pulses, edible oils, kerosene, sugar and some spending money during the festivals. A study by Kannan (2000) points out that "the recent shift in the policy in the allocation and pricing of food grains, announced by the Central Government through its budget proposals for 2000-2001, constitutes a major departure with regard to food security policy in the country". It echoes the fear that this is one of the factors affecting the rural and tribal poor who have been pushed into a chronic situation of food shortage.

It is important to note that many tribal hamlets, quite large in number in the Kollihills, reported hunger deaths around the late 1990s.

Kambalam is a Hamlet and is Labour Management

This hamlet is in a very isolated place, hence getting labour from outside the village is practically difficult. Taking this into consideration, a system has been developed by the tribe, which uses labour within the community. This institution is called kambalam (meaning a 'bed spread').

Related kin, normally living in the same street, get together to form a kambalam. Twelve members form one group, who have a leader called muthalali (meaning 'landlord') and a messenger called uthari. (Uthari means 'spendthrift'.)

Those who need labour for the day are expected to inform the muthalali, with the uthari communicating the message to the group. The labourers are only paid nominally and the rate is fixed for the entire village. At times, the labour is paid in kind by offering a pig as some form of payment.

This kind of kambalam is called kari kambalam (kari is meat) and the pork is shared among all of the members. Sometimes, the pigs are kept until they are more fully grown, and later sold for a better price, with the money being shared among the group. This system has been developed by the community to meet their labour requirements for the entire village.

But, I hasten to add, the Government at the Centre legislated a Food Security Act in September 2013, called the National Food Security Bill (NFSB), and it gives the majority of the poor in India the right to cheap food grains. There are also government schemes such as Public Distribution System (PDS), Revamped Public Distribution System (RPS) and Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), which take care of the essential needs of food security in the country. The rations, which include essentials for food security for households, are also provided at a subsidized price or for free to those who are below the poverty line category. Tribal households are entitled to 35 kg of food grains a month as well as other food related commodities. The elderly are taken care of by the Midday Meal Scheme and the school children are taken care of with the Anthyodhaya Food Scheme. But despite all of these social welfare schemes in operation, some still have food insecurities. It is estimated that between 30 and 40 per cent of the people of the Kollihills are food insecure, mainly because they are income insecure. This has to be investigated further. Studies by Gandhigram Rural University tell us that:

- In rural Tamil Nadu a poor family depends on PDS for 90-120 days in a normal year.
- It depends on wages in kind (like paddy in wet regions, cholam (maize), ragi in dry regions) for 75-90 days in a year.
- They depend on informal markets which sell cheap commodities for 120-150 days in a year.

Clearing Footpaths: The Tribes are law-abiding

The Malayalis of the Kollihills use the footpaths of the hill area regularly. Invasive plants such as lantana, parthenium or other shrubs tend to block the footpaths due to becoming overgrown. Even though an individual walking with a machete normally clears the overgrowth, the community has a method by which the entire Nadu gets involved in the clearing operation.

Twice a year, March-April and August-September, the clearing operation is planned. The Uran (village head) fixes the date for the clearing operation. One person from every household is expected to participate in the activity. The village provides grains from the common granary to prepare food for all of the people participating.

If some households are not represented in these activities, the village council will treat them as offenders and take action against them. Whatever the decision, the household takes the punishment and abides by the ruling.

On February 23, 2020, the Team visited some of the Nadus of the Kollihills and their hamlets to provide Andrew with a first-hand experience of social and economic life in the tribal villages and the idyllic and picturesque landscapes of the Kollihills. Andrew appreciated the activities and achievements on the hills. I assume that he has given his evaluation of the Kollihills Revisit to Hyma, who is the inspiration behind this work, research and development assistance to individuals and self-help groups.

The proposal for the third phase has now been proposed and sent to Professor Bala Hyma for consideration, via Andrew.

Theni Visit February 24-25, 2020

Travel from Kollihills (RJ Grand Resort) to Bodinaickanur (Green Royale Resort) took nearly 7 hours by road (via Rasingapuram, Namakkal, Karur, Dindigul, Theni). Annammadevi was already at the hotel in Bodinaickanur and was making arrangements for us to meet the village project fund beneficiaries from three villages, Sillamarathupatti, Mallingapuram Colony and Karayankadu (aka Mallingapuram main village).

It was about 5.30 pm on February 24, 2020, after a late lunch at the Green Royale, that all three of us (Annammadevi, Andrew and myself) arrived at the Veerakumars, who were our local support with the Revisit 2016-18 and also the first phase Making Deserts Bloom 2001-03.

One of the things all of us (Andrew, Annammadevi and TV) learned from the meetings at the three villages was that the beneficiaries, be it a receiver of a goat and a kid, or a tailoring machine or solar dryer, are continuing to reap benefits from them. In fact, the poor women who received goats and kids, have given a kid each to other deserving women in their SHGs. Those who received sewing machines or embroidery machines have been able to earn money that supplements their livelihoods.

Research Internship April-June 2020

Our Local Support and Field Investigator Mr. S. Prakasam (Prakash) has been appointed as our Research Intern for April – June 2020, and has been assigned to complete a Household Profile Survey with a specific number of profiles (60) over the period of his internship.

Prakash has already begun his work, which commenced on April 01, 2020. He will carry out the survey at his own pace, as the entire area of the Kollihills is now under lockdown since March 24, 2020 because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

He is conducting the survey via telephone communication everyday and in doing some face-to-face surveys when he is visiting Solakkadu, the market town of the Kollihills, to pick up any essentials he requires. Because the telecom network is rather tenuous and signals are often weak or absent on the hills, the survey is being conducted at a rather slow pace, that is why he is only able to survey about 20 households a month.

OBITUARIES

It is with deep sadness to announce that one of our brilliant authors Noreen Wainwright has sadly passed away, we send all of our love and sympathy to Brian, her family and friends.

We also send our deepest condolences to Dr Bruce Richardson's family, who has also recently passed away. (Dr Bruce Richardson, Manager of The Bookshop in Leek, Staffordshire. Died June 2020.)

RIP

Why not listen to Malcolm Henson reading chapters one and two of Stacey Roberts the Green Girl.

Chapter One:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IHHYgonFSsG7oh1oiRMSnCKDrYgurB-5/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter Two:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m8VnW-CPzVor3MCsYmsKIuHhV5O8Ws_m/view?usp=sharing

Let us know what you think and whether you would like to here the next couple of chapters in the next newsletter.



Chartered Accountants and
Business Advisors

Gibson House
Hurricane Court
Hurricane Close
Stafford
ST16 1GZ

Telephone
(01785) 258 311
Fax
(01785) 252 614

Email
info@deansaccountants.com

Henson Editorial Services & North Staffordshire Press

Smart Innovation Hub

Denise Coates Foundation Building

Keele University

Staffordshire

ST5 5NS

Email: enquiries@hensoneditorial.com

