

Cowfold History Society

COWFOLD AND THE GODMAN BOOK

Most Sussex villages have benefactors that have made a significant contribution to community life. But few can also celebrate a precious handwritten and bound record of life before 1930.

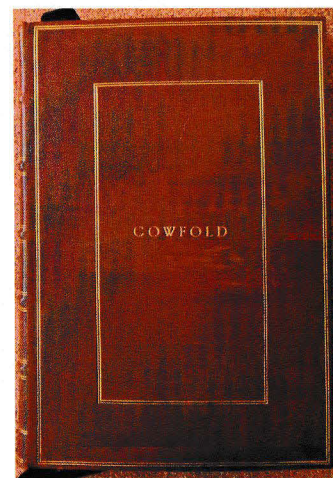
The Godman Book was written by Colonel Charles Godman and presented to the Vicar of Cowfold in 1930. The Godman family came to Cowfold in the late 1800s and owned a number of large properties in the area including South Lodge (now the South Lodge hotel). The family were major benefactors to the village and its Church, they built and donated the Village Hall and provided the land that is now the recreation ground and playing fields. Charles Godman was chairman of the Parish Council during World War 1 and was also chairman of the St Peter's School governors. He died on 18 January 1941 aged 91.

The Book is both an important historical record, in particular of key features and furnishings of the Church such as the 15th century tower, nave and font, the stained glass windows, and a fascinating account of some of the characters who lived in and around Cowfold and their contribution to village life. The Church's chief glory is the 15th century Nelond Brass but other commemorations include that to Richard Peirce who was wounded "thr' his body" fighting for Charles 1 at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642 but returned to the village, recovered and lived to 94.

The Book records village education from the first school erected in 1801 to the present St Peter's School. In the early 1800s parents paid 2d (old pence) for their children to be taught Reading, Writing and Arithmetic and 2d more for Geography. It was not unusual then for a visitor to find a boy standing and wearing a dunce's cap and the schoolmaster walking about with a cane in his hand.

Cowfold had its collection of odd characters. The post was delivered by a man from Horsham who drove a small cart drawn by two dogs. He referred to the village as "Drunken Cowfold". A decrepit old woman lived in a tumbledown cottage and was thought to be a witch; she made love potions on request and could also cast spells on people who were not liked.

The Book is owned by the Church and is rarely seen in public. Its latest outing was at the History Society's AGM on 7 April this year.



The Godman Book presented to the Vicar of Cowfold in 1930 by Colonel Charles Godman.

Colonel Charles Godman

