



OLD PHOTOS OF THE FOREST OF DEAN
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Courtesy of : Terry Halford

Terry wrote (August 2007): "Please find enclosed 3 pics concerning the monument built by the Italian Prisoners of War at camp no 61 Wynols Hill Coleford. It was completed in 1944. The monument was built to commemorate the 50th anniversary of radio transmissions. It was made from whatever was available and in the prisoner's own time after their daily work at the camp or in the local area. The monument was eventually finished at Christmas 1944. The inscriptions were in Italian and English and read guglielmo marconi magicio of the ether the Italian Prisoners of War Christmas 1944. There were also shields of sundry cities and states in the folds of the curtain walls of the crescent flanking the central tower. The sad fact is that this monument could have been saved. In 1961, a local history society requested a quotation from a broker to insure the monument. The group received no reply. With the cost of repairing the monument rising, the council decided their workload was too heavy to allow an engineer, who's department would be responsible for the work, to carry out the work As the monument fell into disrepair it was discovered that the Italian consulate had offered to pay for the upkeep, but this was refused by the West Dean council, The monument was still on site during the Silver Jubilee celebrations of H. M. The Queen in 1977. It was destroyed soon after to make way for the Wynols Hill housing estate. The photos enclosed show the monument in its heyday. The second picture is of one of the globes which can be seen on the monument with the doves sitting on top. The two globes remain in a garden not to far from the site of the monument along with the doves. The third photo is a copy of an original postage frank from a postcard sent to a loved one by a prisoner".

Royston Pritchard recalled (August 2007) that the central tower was hollow. There was a door into the monument on the back side and inside the door was a ladder to taking you up to the flagpole at the top. Royston recalls that it was like going up a chimney.

Roger Matthews? added (August 2007): "The demolition of the monument was an act of vandalism comparable to the demolition of the nearby "mansion" (Wynols Hill House). I share Royston Pritchard's memories of the ladder - and recall fondly constant explorations of the crumbling mansion - at considerable risk to life and limb!".

Another comment was left (December 2007): "I too can recall the memorial still being in place albeit in a bit of a state. I left school in 1977 and as boys we would climb up the steel rung ladder inside the tower to stick our heads out of the top. Unfortunately various lads had also lit fires in the tower so the inside was coated with soot making a climb to the top rather messy for the clothes! I totally agree that the demolition was something that the local authorities should be ashamed of having allowed".

In his book "Coleford" (published by Alan Sutton 1983) Dr Cyril Hart confirms records of a house at Wynols Hill from 1725. Dr Hart added in his book: "During the 1939-45 War it was commandeered by the Army in connection with a prisoner-of-war camp, and later was demolished to create a housing site".

Does anyone else recall Wynols Hill House, the P.O.W. camp or the Marconi Memorial?.