

Archive: Home of a kindly magistrate

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INSTANT justice was once handed out at this imposing mansion, one of the the largest private homes in Nuneaton.

The building is Caldwell Hall which was in Avenue Road, where the Nuneaton Club for Young People, better known as Nuneaton Boys Club, now stands.

During the middle of the 19th century, it was owned by a Henry Harpur whose family owned landed at Caldwell, near Kidderminster which is how the hall – and the housing estate we know now – got its name.

Henry was a magistrate and had a room in the hall and a constable would often take an offender there to be fined on the spot for some minor misdemeanor, such as drunkenness.

But Henry was a kindly man and, after he had meted out his punishment, he would make sure the constable, and the offender, were treated to a substantial meal in the kitchen before being sent on their way.

The Harpur family bought what was then Coton Hall and demolished it to build Caldwell Hall which they made their home.

Described as a 'small mansion' it had a dining room, drawing room, book room, servants' hall, butler's pantry, seven bedrooms, two dressing rooms, stables, a double coach house, laundry and a brew house in a park and estate that covered 90 acres.

After the Harpur family left, the hall was occupied by Walter Pearson Evans, nephew of Mary Ann Evans, who found literary fame under the pen name of George Eliot.

Walter considerably enlarged the property, adding a north wing and extending the stables and gardens.

Rufus Jones, who had an elastic web factory at Attleborough and also owned Attleborough Hall, was the last person to live there.

Empty and desolate, the once magnificent building fell into disrepair. It was reported to have been damaged in a fire and was demolished in 1946.