

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2019

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



St Nicholas Church, Alcester in the snow. Undated but probably c1930 (ADG Collection)

JANUARY MEETING

The speaker at our last meeting was a **David Clark** who spoke to us about “**Sentenced to Beyond the Seas: Female Convicts Sentenced to Deportation**”. David’s talk followed the lives of eight Worcestershire women who were sentenced to transportation to Australia.

David explained how, as Deputy Mayor of Worcester, he became interested in the history of the holding cells beneath the courtroom in the Worcester Guildhall. These had been left full of junk for many years and he arranged for them to be cleared and opened to the public.

His research found that in 1780s, on one day fifteen cases were heard in the court in just four hours and every individual was sentenced to death. In England at this time there was much starvation and, as a result crime was rife. He also discovered that, in 1783, aboard a ship carrying 109 female convicts to Australia, eight of them were from Worcester and district. All these would have been held for some time in the cells under the Guildhall. The women’s crimes included such minor offences as stealing a silk handkerchief, stealing clothing and stealing a shroud. Some of the women were held on prison hulks, moored in the Thames, until they could be put aboard a ship, the Lady Penrhyn, for the voyage to Australia.

David explained how he had been fortunate in obtaining a scarce book on Ebay at a bargain price. This book was the journal written by the assistant surgeon aboard the ship. It provided a wonderful, laconic account of the life of the convicts, crew and soldiers on the ship. Life in Australia proved to be hard, but all the women survived, but only one managed to return to England. Several of them married and raised families and some went to begin new lives on Norfolk Island, a remote island in the Pacific Ocean. The large audience clearly showed their appreciation. This was a fascinating, well researched talk and following the meeting, David offered autographed copies of his book on this subject.

SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST READING ROOM

Jim Ranahan has informed me that the SBT reading room has new opening hours from 5th March, and the archives can be accessed from Tuesday to Friday 10.00am-4.30pm, Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm. Access is free.

HOME2HOME SHOP

This shop in Hopkins Precinct is raising funds for the Friends of the Greig Hall by selling quality household items and furniture. Donation of resaleable items are appreciated and volunteers to help in the shop are also needed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our February meeting is also our Annual General Meeting. The Committee is proposing at the meeting to adopt a new constitution for the Society. The current constitution has been unchanged since 1974 and needs to be revised and brought up to date. A copy of the proposed new constitution is attached.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

At the Annual General Meeting next month, we will be re-electing the committee. This year there are a number of vacancies to fill. If you are interested in joining the committee, please call the Society Secretary, Janet Hollington on 01527 89263.

The duties of a committee member are not too onerous, we hold three committee meetings a year. Previous experience is not necessary, as long as you have a keen interest in local history.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions for 2019 are now due. The cost remains at £5 per person. Please put your cash or cheque in an envelope bearing your name and address. If you have already paid, you can pick up your membership card at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

THE MEETING on WEDNESDAY 13th FEBRUARY WILL COMMENCE AT 7.45pm with the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Immediately after the AGM our talk will follow and the speaker for the evening is a return visit by **Richard Osborne**. His subject is “**Exploring the History of St Nicholas’ Church Alcester**”.

Meetings are held at St Benedict’s RC High School Sixth Form Centre. All are welcome to attend.

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