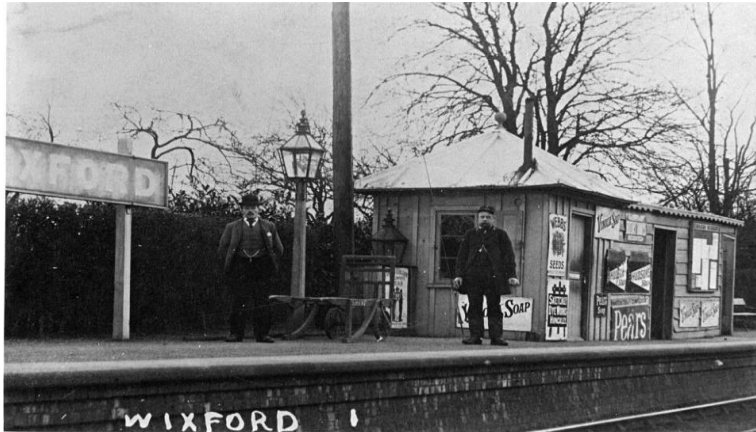


ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2016



Wixford
Station, circa,
1905 (ADLHS
Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

LAST MEETING: The famous 'back-to-back' houses in central Birmingham provided the fascinating focus of our most recent meeting when speaker, Clive Katz, a guide at the back-to-backs gave some of the background to the houses but focused largely on the actual people who had lived in the houses, their lives and the way they lived.

Clive pointed out that when the back-to-backs and other artisan dwellings were built during the late 18th century, they were sited on the, then, edge of Birmingham and built on fields and farmland with Birmingham itself a short distance away, up a hill. Most of the Birmingham back-to-backs were built around a central courtyard whilst in the north of England they tended to be built in rows. This central courtyard also housed the one or two shared privies. The 'night soil' man would call during the hours of darkness to remove the waste which was then taken, originally to Nechells, but later to Solihull – hence the name 'soil hill'.

There was no water in the court, this had to be drawn by hand and carried from the nearby Ladywell, hence the name Ladywell Walk, still to be seen.

The houses have been dressed by the National Trust to represent certain eras in their history. The first is the 1840s house. No. 1 of Court 15, which housed a Jewish immigrant family headed by Lawrence Levy. The 1840s were a boom time for Birmingham, so much so, that Lawrence Levy was able to set up in business in the house itself, as a maker of clock hands.

The 1870s house by now contained gas lamps and wallpaper. However, at this time crime was also rampant among the darkened streets and the Mayor, Joseph Chamberlain, brought gas lighting to Victorian Birmingham to stem the crime wave and Welsh water was piped to Birmingham too. During this time Hubert Oldfield lived in Court 15 with his wife and 10 children – plus 2 lodgers! Hubert was also in business at the house, as a glass eye maker, possibly for toys or for use by taxidermists.

The back-to-backs housed only poor and elderly people during the 1930's and latterly only 20 people lived in Court 15. Clive played an audio recording of reminiscences of one resident of that time; recollections of making do, rag-rug making and the bugs which infected the house from time to time.

This was a marvellous talk given by a really excellent speaker.

TRIP TO SHREWSBURY – SATURDAY JUNE 4TH:

We will be departing from outside the old library in Priory Road, Alcester at 9.00am promptly. We will be leaving Shrewsbury at 4.30pm and so should arrive home by 6 o'clock. **Please note there are a few seats left for this trip, at £11 each.** Please contact me by phone on **01789 763121** if you would like one of these.

TRIP TO THE HIVE AT WORCESTER, WEDNESDAY JULY 13TH: Please see the attached sheet for details of this evening trip, departing, again, from Priory Road at 6.00pm promptly and returning home by approximately 9.45pm. There are still seats available for this trip and seats may be booked at our next meeting in June – payment of £9 on booking, please.

ALCESTER ANNUAL STREET MARKET: We will again, be having a stall at the Street Market on Sunday June 12th selling our publications past and present and mounting a display to showcase the work of the Society – so do pop along and have a look and a chat!

NEXT MEETING: Please note – for this month only, our meeting will be on Wednesday June 15th, the Third Wednesday in the month and not the usual Second Wednesday

Our speaker at the meeting on **June 15th** will be Julie Crawshaw who is Project Manager of the New Place project in Stratford-upon-Avon. New Place, the site of William Shakespeare's last home in Stratford, has undergone an extensive programme of restoration and refurbishment and is due to be re-opened to the public in early July. Julie will give a fully illustrated talk outlining the history of New Place itself and report on the sometimes controversial restoration work which has taken place in the heart of Stratford.

Once again, our next meeting will be on **Wednesday 15th June**, commencing at 8.00pm at St Benedict's Sixth Form Centre, Kinwarton Road, Alcester. All are welcome to attend.

SUE FISHER