

# ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018

[www.alcesterhistory.org.uk](http://www.alcesterhistory.org.uk)



The Crown Inn  
at Haselor.  
"W Cheshire"  
on the inn sign  
1907  
(ADLHS  
Collection)

**APRIL MEETING:** The speaker at our April meeting was Dr Sylvia Pinches, who spoke to us about "**A Tale of Two Castles: Warwick & Kenilworth**". She explained the history of these two buildings, the most prominent castles in Warwickshire from their founding in the years following the Norman Conquest through to the present day.

Warwick was originally a motte and bailey castle built in 1068. Part of the site is today called Ethelfleda's Mount, but this was not part of the Saxon *burh* founded in 914 on the site.

Kenilworth was built by Geoffrey de Clinton in the 1120s during the reign of King Henry I. Both castles were rivals for power in the area.

Although both castles were improved and extended, it was during the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that they reached the height of their grandeur.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester held Kenilworth and spent huge sums of money to improve conditions ready for the Queen's progress through the country in 1570, 1572 and 1573. In 1575 she stayed for three weeks enjoying parties, dancing and feasting. The gardens were specially created for the visit too.

Warwick had fallen into disrepair during the 16<sup>th</sup> century until Fulke Greville was given the castle and spent £20,000 (an enormous sum) to refurbish the castle and its grounds.

Kenilworth was blown up after the Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and although the ruins were considered romantic by later visitors, it was not until it passed into the care of English Heritage that the buildings were made safe and the gardens restored.

Warwick however had a chequered history: the Earl of Warwick sold the castle in 1978 to the Tussaud Group (of waxworks fame) and later it was run by Merlin Entertainments as what is little more than a theme park. It was a fascinating talk about the two local castles and much enjoyed by the large audience.

### **EVENING VISIT TO HILL CLOSE GARDENS, WARWICK – TUESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> JULY:**

Hill Close Gardens are the restored pleasure gardens which originally belonged to the shopkeepers and merchants of Warwick who often lived "above the shop" in the centre of the town with no outside recreational space or garden. The pleasure gardens at Hill Close had become derelict and overgrown before being gradually rescued and restored by Hill Close Gardens Trust. The coach will leave Alcester at **6.15pm**. On arrival there will be a brief introductory talk followed by a guided tour of the various gardens. The visit will conclude with refreshments before returning to Alcester by approximately 9.30 pm. The cost will be £15 per person (to include entrance, refreshments and coach).

### **ALCESTER TOWN HALL 400<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY:**

Our own Ian Greig will also be giving a talk at the Town Hall on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May entitled **From Market House to Social Centre: 400 years of Alcester Town Hall**. Tickets for the talk are £5 each and include cheese and wine during the interval. Doors open at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start and tickets may be obtained from Venue Espresso or Susan Juned on 01789 762751.

During the summer there will be several opportunities to view the exhibition on the history of the Town Hall to which the Society has contributed a section entitled 'The Town Hall at the heart of the community'.

**MAY MEETING:** At our next meeting on **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May** the speaker for the evening will be Mairi Macdonald, former Head of Local Collections at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Her subject is "**Medieval Women**". Meetings are held at St Benedict's RC High School Sixth Form Centre and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome to attend.

Alan Godfrey

(alandgodfrey@hotmail.com)