

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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D Company of the 3rd (City) Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment in Alcester. The troops are stood in Priory Road at the side of the Globe Hotel and facing the Methodist Church. (ADLHS Collection)

OCTOBER MEETING

The speaker at our last meeting was a return visit, after many years, by Tim Bridges who spoke to us about **“Warwickshire Churches”**.

Tim Bridges explained that he had been very much involved in the conservation of the churches of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Birmingham. He serves on the Worcestershire & Dudley Historic Churches Trust, and the Worcester and Birmingham Diocesan Advisory Committees and, since March 2010, also works as Church Buildings Support Officer in Hereford Diocese. He is also Conservation Adviser for the Victorian Society (Birmingham & West Midlands Group).

Tim’s illustrated talk followed a timeline of the architecture of Warwickshire’s churches from the Anglo Saxon Wootton Wawen (“The Saxon Sanctuary”) through to the Victorian churches designed by Pugin and George Gilbert Scott.

Wootton Wawen church was a monastery church which still shows arches of the 9th/10th century. Henley in Arden was built as chapel of ease under Wootton Wawen. Another church with identifiable Saxon features is Loxley. Warwickshire has many churches surviving from the Norman era, which include Barton-on-the-Heath, St Mary’s Warwick, Berkswell, Halford and Pillerton Hersey. The large church at Brailes was known as the “Cathedral of the Feldon” and was built, thanks to donations from wealthy patrons.

The introduction of the perpendicular style of architecture led to the founding of Holy Trinity, Stratford-upon-Avon and Weston-on-Avon. Tall spires became a feature of the landscape. Coughton parish church was built in the 15th century and still possesses glorious medieval stained glass. The Guild Chapel in Stratford still has remains of the wall paintings which would have adorned many of the local churches at this time.

The Reformation in the 16th century led to huge changes in order to convert a Catholic country to a Protestant country. Few new churches were built, however many were adapted including Maxstoke, beside the ruins of the Maxstoke Priory, and Merevale, where the abbey gatehouse became the parish church.

From the mid-17th century non-conformist chapels and churches start to appear. The Friend’s meeting house in Ettington is a simple building and one of the smallest Quaker meeting houses in the country. Over the next hundred years new churches in the Georgian style were built including St Paul’s in the jewellery quarter of Birmingham.

In the nineteenth century there was a Victorian gothic revival. Alvechurch church was much restored by William Butterfield and Wasperton church was largely rebuilt by George Gilbert Scott in 1843. The requirement to make churches more comfortable for their congregations, led to heating being installed and chimneys being added. St Chad’s Roman Catholic Cathedral in Birmingham, designed by Augustus Pugin, was the first Catholic cathedral to be built since the Reformation.

This was a fascinating talk with lots of local interest much appreciated by our members and visitors present.

NEXT MEETING: Our next talk will be on **Wednesday 14th November** the speaker for the evening is Sir Andrew Hamilton. His subject is **“Stolen Lives”** and looks at the lives of some of the individuals who were sacrificed for King and Country during the Great War. Meetings are held at St Benedict’s RC High School Sixth Form Centre and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome to attend.

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