

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2018

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



Alcester Mop 1915
The ox roast in
Henley Street
(ADLHS Collection)

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The speaker at our last meeting was a return visit by former police inspector Graham Sutherland who spoke to us about **“Warwickshire Crime & Criminals”**.

His talk covered a variety of crimes committed in the county between 1605 and 1926.

Many of the conspirators in the ‘Gunpowder Plot’ of 1605 had local connections. Robert Catesby was born in Lapworth and his mother was Anne Throckmorton of Coughton Court, John Grant lived at Norbrook, outside Warwick. After Guy Fawkes failure to blow up Parliament, a group of sympathisers met Everard Digby and Catesby at Dunchurch. However, they knew they had failed and dispersed. Catesby stole horses from Warwick Castle and his trail was followed into Staffordshire. He was shot and the others were arrested and later executed.

Graham’s next tale was the Gibbet Hill Murder of 1765. Three friends returning from Coventry market were set upon at Gibbet Hill near Kenilworth. Thomas Edwards was injured and died. Two dragoons and a ribbon worker were arrested and tried. After being found guilty they were hanged and then their bodies were covered in tar and hung on a gibbet at the scene of the crime.

On 26th May 1817 a young girl, Mary Ashford, was murdered at Erdington (then in Warwickshire). The suspect, was Abraham Thornton, but he was found not guilty. Mary’s brother was incensed and claimed ‘Appeal of Murder’, Thornton’s response was to throw down a gauntlet and ‘Trial by Wager of Battel’. Again, Thornton was found not guilty, but fled to America.

In 1886 Police Constable William Hine left home to go out on patrol in Fenny Compton. He failed to return home and a search was begun. Eight days later the canal was dragged and his body was recovered. Despite a full-scale murder hunt, no new information was received, even after police officers disguised as women were sent into the village to see if they could discover anything. They must have stuck out like sore thumbs in such a small community! William’s murder remains unsolved to this day.

Dial House Farm in Ashow was the scene of the brutal murder of Sarah Dormer in 1819. Her servant, Ann Heytre, was arrested and charged with the ‘Petty Treason’ not murder. She claimed she had heard voices telling her to do it. Needless to say, she was found guilty and hanged a few days later. Undoubtedly, she was mentally ill and if she had been from a higher status in society, she would have had a better defence and her story may have had a different ending.

Graham’s other cases were equally as exciting and left the audience wanting to hear more.

FULKE GREVILLE FESTIVAL

The talented Elizabethan poet, dramatist and statesman, Sir Fulke Greville (1554-1628) was a native of Alcester and was responsible for giving the town £300 to build a market hall in 1618. Now, in the Town Hall’s 400th anniversary year, there is a festival to celebrate his life and work. The Festival includes:

28th September 7.30pm “The Life & Times of Sir Fulke Greville” - Alcester Town Hall £5 (Lecture)

29th September 3.00pm “Fulke Greville’s Poetry & Plays” - Alcester Town Hall £7 (Lecture) **Sponsored by ADLHS**

29th September 7.30pm “Sonnets & Song – A Celebratory Concert & Recital” – Alcester Town Hall £10 (with wine & canapés)

30th September 2.00pm “Warwickshire’s Elizabethan & Jacobean Gardens” - Alcester Town Hall £5 (Lecture)

30th September 4.00pm “Politicians & Film Stars – the Other Fulke Grevilles” – Alcester Town Hall £5 (Lecture)

If you would like to book these events or find out more, see the website: www.fulkefest.org.uk Tickets will be available on the door for these talks.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY – SUNDAY 16th SEPTEMBER

The Society took part in the national Heritage Open Day scheme by putting on a display of photographs from the latest Photo-survey and from our archive. Around 40 people visited the display. In addition, there was much interest in the display put on by Maureen Harris and the Friends of Warwickshire County Record Office on the English Civil War. They also circulated a questionnaire to test visitors’ knowledge of the Civil War.

NEXT MEETING: Our next talk will be on **Wednesday 10th October** the speaker for the evening is Tim Bridges. His subject is **“Warwickshire Churches”**. 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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