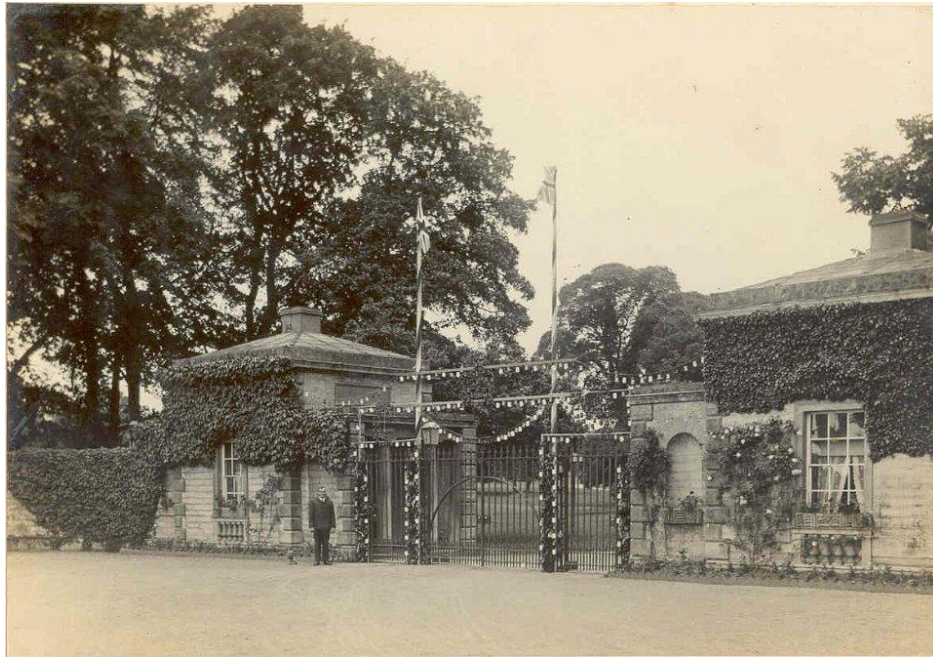


ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2019

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



The gates to Ragley Hall, thought to have been decorated for 1911 Coronation (ADLHS Collection)

MARCH MEETING

The speaker at our last meeting was **Nic Fulcher**, who spoke to us about “**Leeds Castle**”. His talk looked at the history at this iconic castle in Kent. The first castle was built in 1119 by Robert de Crevecoeur. The castle was bought as an investment by Eleanor of Castile, wife of King Edward I. It became one of the King’s favourite residences and used as his retreat. During this time the castle was much improved, with the lake around the castle created and a ‘gloriette’ with the royal apartments built. After Isabella of France, wife of King Edward II, was refused entry the castle was besieged. After the King’s death in 1327, it became the Queen’s primary residence. Henry VIII transformed the castle for his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Over the centuries the castle formed part of the dower goods for six queens of England. The castle escaped damage during the Civil War as the owners, the Culpepper family sided with Parliament.

During the nineteenth century the castle was owned by the Wykeham Martins family, who remodelled the castle in the Tudor style, completed in 1823, that remains today.

In 1926 the castle was bought by Olive Paget, daughter of 1st Baron Queensborough. She and her sister had inherited a fortune from their American mother. She married Sir Adrian Baillie in 1931 and became Lady Baillie, although they divorced in 1944.

The castle was gutted to make alterations and no expense was spared. She also added 520 acres of land to the estate. Lady Baillie used the castle for entertaining at weekends and a long list of celebrities and socialites were invited there, including Noel Coward, Charlie Chaplin & Errol Flynn among others. She employed the French designer, Stéphane Boudin to carry out many of the restorations and improvements to the castle. During the Second World War the castle became a VAD hospital, when Lady Baillie herself worked as a nurse. Lady Baillie died in 1974 and in her will she left instructions for the castle and grounds to be made available to the public and to be run by a charitable trust.

Nic’s talk was delivered with authority and extremely well illustrated, especially with a video sequence showing the changes to the castle over the centuries.

VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE TEAS & COFFEES

We had a few offers to join the coffee rota, however there are still a few more vacancies for volunteers to help with teas and coffees. Volunteers may choose at which meeting to help and full instruction will be provided. If you would like to help, please put your name down at the entrance table at the next meeting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not already paid your 2019 subscription, it is now overdue. 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. If you are not able to attend the meeting, please send your payment to our treasurer: Sue Fisher, 37 Corinthian Court, Alcester B49 5AY.

NEXT MEETING:

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 10th April** starting at 8.00pm and the speaker for the evening is **Chris Pickford**. His subject is “**Revising Pevsner’s Warwickshire: The Alcester Area Revisited**”. Chris Pickford has close associations with Warwickshire and has worked in many County Record Offices, becoming County Archivist at Bedford. He ran the Church of England Record Centre in London and latterly works in Kidderminster at the Museum of Carpet. In 2016 he completed a revision of the “Pevsner” guide for Warwickshire.

Meetings are held at St Benedict’s RC High School, Sixth Form Centre, Kinwarton Road, Alcester B49 6PX. All are welcome to attend.

Alan Godfrey

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