

# ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2015



Bowen's shop at 12 High Street with Mr Bowen (Sam's father) in the doorway.  
c1910s  
ADLHS Collection

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

**DECEMBER MEETING:** At our last meeting we were treated to a wonderful evening of true, 'local history' – an evening that proved, if that were necessary, that history is, first and foremost, about the lives of ordinary people doing ordinary things in small towns like Alcester. Our speaker was John Bunting, well known to us for being an avid collector of photographs and memorabilia featuring Alcester and its people.

It was this collection which provided the basis for a marvellous evening of slides showing life in Alcester before, during and after the First World War.

We saw pictures of the various street celebrations when well laden tables lined the High Street and Church Street which marked both the cessation of hostilities and the armistice. Above it all, garlands of home-made bunting were stretched across the streets above the heads of those enjoying the festivities.

The annual Mop Fairs, seething with people, showed that the delight of young and old in all the fun of the fair was as great then, as now.

Some of the most moving pictures shown were of those men, before the war – young, hopeful and optimistic, all sure it would 'all be over by Christmas' – who failed to return.

John pointed out though; that a lot of the men did return to the town took up their duties again with the fire brigade, the football club and the fishing club when life eventually returned to normal. They went back to their jobs at places like Dowdeswell's Needle factory and the Speedwell Cycle Works in Bleachfield Street. Photographs reflecting this pageant of real life loss, sorrow and relief were hugely enjoyed by the capacity audience at St Benedict's on what was, appropriately, Armistice Day.

This was a superb evening of local history brought to life by a wonderful collection of photographs and a speaker

supremely familiar with the people and places he spoke of, giving poignant, potted biographies of those featured, along the way John was ably assisted on the technical side by John Ruffell.

### **OFFICIALLY, THE OLDEST HOUSE IN ALCESTER:**

Several members of your committee were recently invited by Mrs Jan Trory of 21, High Street to view the interior of her house. The house has been officially acknowledged by architectural historian Nat Alcock, as the oldest, currently known domestic building in the country. The house contains cruck beams that have been subjected to dendrochronology testing which prove that they were felled in 1254. The story of our visit and of the house itself will appear in an article in the next edition of Local Past.

**NEXT MEETING:** As is traditional, our Christmas meeting on **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December** will feature a festive buffet with food provided by all, and for all to share. So please bring along some mince pies, sausage rolls or other slightly festive food to get the Christmas season off to a good start!

Our speaker will be Dr Richard Churchley who has been a member for many years and has indeed, spoken at our meetings several times before. On this occasion however, he will be entertaining us in a slightly different way which reflects one of his other interests: Warwickshire and Worcestershire folksongs.

Richard is an accomplished musician and singer who regularly performs with different folk groups and bands in the area.

Meetings are held at St Benedict's Sixth Form Centre, Alcester and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**SUE FISHER**