

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2016



Malt Mill Lane,
pre 1914, prior
to restoration in
the 1960's
(ADLHS
Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

NOVEMBER MEETING: All those who attended our last meeting would, I think, agree that we were treated to a wonderful and extremely professional audio-visual presentation by Andrew Lound. The talk and presentation was entitled 'When the Lights Went Out – Birmingham Goes to War' and Mr Lound presented this dressed in the uniform of an Air Raid Warden of the period.

Our speaker began by telling of the build-up to war with the growth and power of Hitler's Germany overshadowing all else in Europe until, finally, came the invasion of Poland which Britain and other European countries were mandated to protect.

Neville Chamberlain, a son of Birmingham and also the Prime Minister proved no match for the devious Adolf Hitler in the war of words and, as we all know, trusted Hitler too much, with the inevitable result.

Andrew Lound detailed all Birmingham's preparations to protect the city and its population from assault by the enemy. The air-raid shelters, the anti-aircraft guns in Aston Park, shop windows covered in the familiar criss-cross of tape to prevent injury.

The photographs and wonderful newsreel footage shown were amazing and really brought to life the sense of imminent danger which must have pervaded the streets of the city at that time.

Some younger members of the audience might have been surprised to hear that Birmingham suffered several lengthy air-raids lasting from four to ten hours, followed by four, twelve hour raids. The terror experienced by brummies' at that time, taking refuge in air-raid shelters, can only be imagined.

Andrew Lound pointed out, as we gazed in fascination at the photographs of the devastated city centre, the curious anomalies which arose during these raids. For instance, in the centre of town where whole streets were flattened, the Times Furniture building stood alone, untouched. The Soho Foundry also received a direct hit yet, amazingly, only three people were killed as a result.

One particularly fascinating feature of this presentation was a 'birds eye' view effect, of the city as a bombing raid took place and the resultant flares of flame as the bombs landed on their targets.

This was a truly memorable talk and presentation which, as well as some wonderful visual effects, was augmented by interviews, music of the time and newsreel snippets.

LOCAL PAST: A reminder to everyone that the latest edition of Local Past is now on sale priced at £2 a copy. This edition contains a plethora of fascinating articles including one on the

public entertainment on offer in Alcester over a hundred years ago. Both the Town Hall and the Corn Exchange (later to become Alcester's cinema) were venues for entertainments when singers, actors and musicians descended on the town. Local Past also has articles on famers and farm life in Binton; the origins of "tueries" and where the name came from; and, a relic of a long-gone Birmingham brewery still to be found in the Swan Hotel. All this and more can be found in Local Past on sale at **Alcester Library, Roman Alcester, PSW, Coffee @26, Mace(formerly Ross Motors) Evesham Street, Alcester and PSW in Studley**. Local Past is also on sale at our monthly meetings or by post (see our website).

COMMITTEE: We are pleased to welcome Dr. Richard Churchley back to our committee after an absence of some 22 years! Richard is the author of many books on local history in addition to being a really excellent speaker on a wide variety of local history topics. He was also one of the founding members of the Society when it was formed by Edward Saville in 1976.

2017 PROGRAMME OF TALKS: Our Programme of Talks for the coming year will be available at the December meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Our Christmas meeting on 14th December will be traditional in all aspects! It will feature our customary 'bring and share' buffet where everyone brings along some seasonal food for everyone to enjoy. We will also be having our usual Christmas raffle and entrance will be free to members.

Our speakers, Paul Harding and Helen Lee of Discover History will, in a sense, follow on from our last talk and tell us all about **A 1940's Christmas!** They will demonstrate that despite the backdrop of rationing and 'make-do and mend' it was still possible to enjoy a very happy Christmas.

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

SUE FISHER

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year