

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2015



Crashed car at
Oversley Green
1918

(ADLHS Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

LAST MEETING: In this, the bi-centennial year of England's victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the New Year of talks began, very appropriately, with a wonderful talk and visual presentation on the battle itself entitled **Waterloo – A Close Run Thing**.

Our speaker and, also one of our members, was Dr. Paul Gray who, for over 30 years lived and worked in Belgium very close to the site of the famous battle. Over the years he gave many guided tours of the battle ground and also many lectures on the subject which had always fascinated him.

Dr Gray's marvellously descriptive talk really brought the battle alive with the aid of graphic maps of the various forces involved and their positions, portraits of the main participants. He also showed excerpts from the famous 1970 film, "Waterloo", starring Rod Steiger as Napoleon and Christopher Plummer as Wellington, which, Dr Gray felt gave a very fair representation of events on the day.

Dr Gray explained the background to the battle and the terrain over which it took place including the vital farmhouse of Hougoumont whose closed gate was of such importance to the eventual victory of Wellington and the allies. Photographs showed the buildings and landmarks as they are today - the farmhouse and its gate, still recognisable.

The battle itself lasted the whole day and into the evening with the eventual result being confirmed with arrival of the Prussian army under the command Marshall Blucher. The Prussian army had been defeated by the French two days previously at Ligny, some thirty miles distant. Wellington, by messenger, offered the Prussians battle against the French at Waterloo. This meant thousands of men marching from Ligny to Waterloo, traversing very poor and narrow roads. Their eventual arrival, late in the day, helped bring the battle to its triumphant conclusion.

This was a really excellent talk by an eloquent expert on his subject accompanied by a marvellous visual presentation of maps, pictures and film clips.

ARCHIVE STORAGE: For the past sixteen years the Society has been lucky enough to have storage facilities for our archive material at Alcester Library. The facilities, in the

non-public area of the library, were first class, access was easy and, most importantly, and the documents were safely stored.

It is only the uncertainty of the library's future which has forced us to seek alternative storage. Once again, we have been fortunate to be offered storage facilities at the newly refurbished Church House in Butter Street, right in the centre of town.

Soon after Christmas members of the committee moved the archive material from the library into the upper room at Church House where it is now safely and securely installed in specially purchased locking cabinets. We would like to thank both Alcester Library and the Church House authorities for all their help both past and present.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Please note that the February meeting will begin with the AGM commencing at 8.00pm.

Subscriptions are now due and remain, for this year, at £3 per person, plus postage (£6.36) for those receiving their Newsletter by post. In order to prevent long queues at the entrance and so that the meeting can begin on time **please have your money ready, in an envelope bearing both your name and address**. This really does help and so, many thanks to all those who followed this procedure last month!

FEBRUARY SPEAKER: Immediately following the AGM our February speaker and, also, our Chairman, Graham Downie, will take the floor. Graham's talk is entitled **Showmen and Fairs of the Black Country**. Graham is Chairman of the Fairground Association and is an acknowledged expert on this subject in addition to possessing an encyclopaedic collection of historic photographs of fairs from all over the country. Graham, as many will know, is also a very experienced and accomplished speaker so this talk should not be missed.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 11th February at St Benedict's 6th Form Centre, Kinwarton Road, commencing at 8.00pm.

All are welcome.

SUE FISHER