

# ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016



Great Alne Station  
& Station Master's  
House, circa 1930.  
(ADLHS Collection)

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

**DECEMBER MEETING:** At our last meeting of 2016 we were treated to yet another strand of true 'local history' with the expert guidance of our speaker Dr. Richard Churchley.

Richard has been a member of the Society for many years and following a successful teaching career he has devoted himself to his other great love, that of local history in all its aspects, writing several books on the subject. He is also a very popular speaker on many facets of local history. On this most recent occasion he concentrated on the folk songs and music of Warwickshire and Worcestershire and what a fantastic evening it proved to be! Richard Churchley also happens to be a gifted musician and had brought along just three of his instruments with which to entertain as well as enlighten us.

Up until the 1980's the National Songbook was used in all schools and was, itself, a repository for many obscure local songs which became known to generations of school children – alas this is no longer so.

Richard highlighted the two pioneers of collected English Folk Songs – Roy Palmer and Cecil Sharp both of whom collected and preserved folk songs from all over the country but especially in Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Both ranged far and wide collecting folk songs verbally from country people and also from industrial workers in the factories of Birmingham and the Black Country.

Cecil Sharp would contact the vicar or doctor in a village to find out if they knew of any local people that knew the words and tunes of local folk songs and country dances. In this way subsequent recordings of folk songs were made before any Prime Minister or Monarch ever took to the airwaves.

Sometimes the songs had no known title and were simply known as the 'Broadway Song' or the 'Birmingham Song'

Richard played examples of the tunes of which he spoke creating a wonderful atmosphere with the simple and often humorous words and music which was thoroughly enjoyed by all – the audience participation was entirely voluntary and very simple - with the aid of small bells and tambourines.

Along with the customary Christmas Buffet, provided by members for all to share, this was a delightful evening which, for many of us, marked the start of Christmas.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Subscriptions for 2016 will be payable at either the January or February meetings. As always, please **do not** hand in money with no indication of who has given it – place your subscription in an envelope bearing your name and address. As agreed at last year's **AGM**, the subscription will, henceforward, be **£5** per person.

**CORRECTION:** Unfortunately a couple of errors crept into our note last month about the tree ring dating of 21 High Street. The date suggests construction of the original house, of which only part of one truss survives, in 1264, not 1254. Also, it's not the country's oldest domestic building....but it **is** the oldest known example of a domestic **base cruck** building, and as such is very exciting news for Alcester. (A base cruck is a particular type of cruck frame). We are very grateful to Mrs Trory for arranging the visit to her house, and apologise both to her and to Dr. Alcock for misquoting his work.

One other thing: Dr Alcock was happy to confirm that he wasn't acting in any "official" capacity, but we are sure he won't mind us explaining to you that he is one of the country's leading experts in this field, and his comments are certainly authoritative. Please take that part of last month's account as artistic licence!

**NEXT MEETING:** The speaker at our first meeting of the New Year on Wednesday 13th January will be Sir Andrew Hamilton whose talk is entitled **Meet at Dawn Unarmed – the Christmas Truce, December 1914** - The truce, by the way, that his grandfather helped to organise!

Sir Andrew is the author of three books on the First World War and he is currently at work on his fourth, dealing with the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

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

**SUE FISHER**