

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2016



Mr Burdett's shop,
Alcester High Street
1935, decorated for
the Jubilee. (ADLHS
Collection).

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

APRIL MEETING: At our most recent meeting we were treated to a delightful guided tour around the wonderful gardens that surround Hidcote Manor. Our guide for the evening was Derek Bull who is a 'garden guide' at these beautiful gardens.

Derek's talk was entitled **Hidcote Manor – One of England's Finest Arts & Craft Style Gardens – Past and Present** and so we were acquainted with the development of the garden and also the story of the house itself and its owner, Lawrence Waterbury Johnston, a rich American bachelor born in 1871, with a deep love of gardens and also of England itself, applying for citizenship in 1900. He also fought in the Boer War.

Lawrence's mother had wished to live in the Cotswolds and so Hidcote was purchased along with 300 acres of land for the sum of £7,200 – its current value is estimated at £15,000,000.

Lawrence Johnston created the garden and was passionate about plants, travelling widely to China, the Alps and South Africa, in search of unusual varieties to bring colour, scent and form to the garden at Hidcote. At one time there were thirteen full time gardeners employed at the gardens helping to bring Lawrence Johnston's vision to fruition. Over the years many plants have been named after Johnston and Hidcote in recognition of his talent and plantsmanship.

There were three phases of developing the gardens ranging from 1907 until 1937. However, during the Second World War the house and gardens fell into some dereliction with flower beds and lawns being used to grow vegetables, until 1950 when the National Trust took it over.

Throughout his talk Derek Bull displayed some wonderful old black and white pictures of the gardens during its early stages of development and also more modern pictures illustrating its enduring beauty.

This was an excellent talk by a very knowledgeable speaker assisted by a wide range of slides illustrating the history of the garden and its tranquil beauty. If you have never visited Hidcote then please do – you will not be disappointed. To aid you in this our speaker, Derek Bull, kindly donated a book about the history of Hidcote and a pass for a free, guided tour of the gardens. We will therefore hold a **free raffle** amongst our members at the next meeting when each member will be given a free raffle ticket on entry, the raffle to be drawn after the refreshment break.

OUTING TO SHREWSBURY: Please note we have a few seats still available for this trip on Saturday June 4th. The cost is £11 per person which is payable on booking. Please phone me on **01789 763121** if you would like to go but are unable to get to the next meeting.

JULY EVENING OUTING: Our July, evening outing on Wednesday July 13th will be to the Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service at The Hive in Worcester. A coach has been arranged which will leave Priory Road, Alcester at 6.00pm, returning from Worcester at 9.15pm. The cost of the tour of the Hive and the coach will be £9 per person, and will be for members only as we are restricted to a total of 40. Please pay when booking. The list will be available at the May and June meetings.

On arrival at The Hive we will be split into 2 groups of 20 in each, for the tour, which will last approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. This will include the public resources and the behind the scenes element including the archive strong rooms and archaeological store – areas not normally open to the public. The tour will involve moving around the building but there is a lift between floors and there are a number of chairs in the different rooms.

Our tour is concerned with the Archive & Archaeology Service sections, but the library is open in the evenings and hopefully there should be a short amount of time after the tour to have a quick look at the library.

NEXT MEETING: At our May meeting, on Wednesday 11th May, our speaker will be Clive Katz, a National Trust Guide whose talk is entitled **The Birmingham Back-to-Back Houses – A Social History of the Way People Lived**. Although we had a talk about the 'back-to-backs' a few years ago, this is an entirely different talk in which our speaker will focus on the people who lived in the houses and their lives. Meetings take place at St Benedict's Sixth Form Centre, Kinwarton Road, Alcester and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome.

SUE FISHER