

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2019

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Alcester High Street showing the Corn Exchange and the Bear Hotel. The postcard was sent in 1923 (ADG Collection)

APRIL MEETING

The speaker at our last meeting was **Chris Pickford**, who spoke to us about “**Revising Pevsner’s Warwickshire: The Alcester Area Revisited**”. His talk explained something of the background for the original series of books ‘The Buildings of England’ written by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983). This 46-volume series of county by county books was published between 1951 and 1974. Pevsner, himself, produced 32 volumes, ten more with the collaboration of others and the final four volumes were produced by David Verey or John Newman. Companion books were later produced for Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Most of the original books have more recently been revised, some of them several times.

Pevsner researched every area of England and considered all types of buildings, large and small: churches, public buildings, country houses and other buildings of architectural interest. He visited every building himself with a driver / assistant. His books were intended to be guides for those visiting an area; they used abbreviations and provided detailed coverage of the most notable buildings and notes on lesser-known buildings. The Warwickshire edition of ‘The Buildings of England’ came out in 1966 and Chris Pickford’s revised edition of Pevsner’s Warwickshire was published in 2016.

During the second half Chris Pickford detailed some of his own experiences gathering the information for the second edition, which involved travelling 32,000 car miles around the county. Each of Pevsner’s original entries were all revisited as well as new buildings considered worthy of inclusion in the new edition.

Around South Warwickshire he mentioned, in particular, the vicarage at Bearley, vicarage at Bidford, the double toll booth at Arrow, the Jubilee Inn at Studley and the old cider mill at Ardens Grafton. Under Alcester he explained the expanded entry for St Nicholas’ Church, having researched the plans of the church drawn up by Francis Smith of Warwick. He also mentioned the Catholic church in Priory Road and the old workhouse building, now Kinwarton House, the best example in Warwickshire. The major entry for Alcester is, of course, Ragley Hall, where he spent a day with the Marquess of Hertford being given a thorough guided tour of the Hall and the other buildings on the estate. Once again, we received a fascinating talk with much information and many slides of local interest and from an accomplished speaker.

WEDNESDAY 10th JULY EVENING VISIT

Our evening visit this year is to Pershore. We have arranged a coach from Alcester, which will arrive in Pershore at 7.00pm. This charming riverside town is full of beautiful, well preserved buildings especially those from the Georgian era which line the beautiful High Street. The ancient Pershore Abbey is situated in the oldest part of the town, just behind the High Street. Our visit, which is being hosted by Pershore Heritage & History Society, will commence with a visit to the Pershore Heritage Centre, followed by a conducted tour of the town and then refreshments at the Star Inn (outside, on the riverbank if weather permits). The cost of the coach will be £10. Full details will be provided in the next newsletter. Places on the coach will be limited to around 40.

NEXT MEETING:

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 8th May** starting at 8.00pm and the speaker for the evening is **Professor Bernard Capp**. His subject is “**The World Turned Upside Down: England after the Civil Wars**”. Professor Capp is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Warwick and Fellow of the British Academy, who has just completed 50 years of lecturing at Warwick. His talk looks at England in the years following the English Civil Wars, when radical ideas and movements sprang up to press for new and better forms of society and government. The Levellers, the Diggers, the Quakers and even Royalists, all attempted to promote their ideas. This was an age of intellectual ferment, without parallel in English history, either before or since. Meetings are held at St Benedict’s RC High School, Sixth Form Centre, Kinwarton Road, Alcester B49 6PX. All are welcome to attend.

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