

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2015



Squires Hill,
Studley, pre.
1914 (ADLHS
Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

OCTOBER MEETING: Although not a local history subject we were treated to a veritable tour de force at our last meeting when our distinguished speaker, Dr. Gillian White of Leicester University delivered a wonderful talk on Mary Queen of Scots.

Dr White's dramatic style, during a talk given completely without notes, brought her subject vividly to life evoking the intrigue of court life in both Scotland and France, intrigue which was to surround Mary throughout her life.

Dr White emphasised that there were gaps in Mary's story and that she polarised opinion then, as she still does. She is depicted as either a wicked adulteress or as a poor innocent at the mercy of the ambitious figures who surrounded her.

Mary was born at Linlithgow Castle near Edinburgh though she became Queen of Scots only 6 days later on the sudden death of her father James V. Remarkably, her coronation took place when she was only 9 months old. At the age of five her mother removed her from the swirling intrigues that surrounded her, to the relative safety of the French Court where she enjoyed some safety and security amidst the luxury and magnificence of the French Court.

She became quick witted, charming and well educated learning history, modern languages and needlecraft and gaining a well-rounded education. She married the Dauphin of France at the age of fifteen in what was fortuitously, a love match. Though, through the sudden death of her father-in-law, Henry II, the Dauphin, Francois, ascended the throne only for him to die two years later leaving Mary a widow at the age of only eighteen.

Her story, during which she became a monarch at only 6 days old and by the age of only twenty-five, had lost three kingdoms, three husbands and completely lost contact with her only child, to our eyes, reads like a modern day soap opera.

Dr White told the story of Mary's life with the aid of some wonderful pictures which showed the settings and buildings which played such an important part in her amazing story right up to the final denouement at Fotherginay, with the suggestion that Elizabeth I had been slyly tricked into signing her death warrant.....

This was a really marvellous talk given by a masterly speaker.

CORRECTION: Many thanks to David Rayner of Haselor, a long-time member of the Society, for pointing out that the photograph at the head of the Newsletter last month did not, in fact, show the main street of Haselor.

Apparently the picture shows the main street through Walcote. It seems that many old postcards and photographs confuse the adjoining, but distinct, villages of Haselor and Walcote, as in this case.

Very many thanks to David for this correct information.

We have thousands of photographs in our archive and if anyone knows that any captions used are incorrect, do let us know.

NEXT MEETING: We have a real treat in store for our November meeting when our own John Bunting will be giving an extremely appropriate talk on **11th November**, Armistice Day. This fully illustrated talk is entitled "**Alcester during the First World War**". This talk and slide show is based on the presentation previously shown at the Jubilee Centre to great acclaim last year. However, it has been completely updated and augmented with much new material and photographs showing Alcester before, during and after the war. John will be ably assisted by John Ruffell.

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

SUE FISHER