

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2016



The ancient dovecote at Kinwarton, adjacent to the church. (ADLHS Photo Archive)

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OCTOBER MEETING: At our most recent meeting we were treated to a fascinating insight into one of our country's most iconic figures from the past – a figure we perhaps thought we were already very familiar with. Our speaker, Cora Weaver, certainly proved us all wrong if that was the case! Her very eloquent talk focused on Florence Nightingale and the state of her health and the steps she took to remedy her own ill-health. Cora Weaver spoke from the viewpoint of a Malvern resident for some thirty-nine years, and one very familiar with the history of the town and its health giving attractions to visitors from far and wide, particularly in the Victorian era.

Florence Nightingale, the daughter of rich parents, was born in Italy as was her sister Parthenope. She possessed an enquiring, one might almost say intellectual, mind with a particular interest in the sciences.

She first visited Malvern in 1848 joining many other middle class Victorians who were preoccupied with their health. She stayed at the Foley Arms in the town, undergoing regular water treatments which to our minds might sound both unpleasant and uncomfortable but as she stayed for seven weeks we must assume that she found some benefits from her treatment.

Cora Weaver pointed out that some doctors in Malvern enjoyed a loyal following of patients including the Nightingales. One such was Dr. Edward Johnson who eventually moved his practice to Umberslade Hall, still a beautiful and grand house near Hockley Heath. Both Florence and her father visited Dr Johnson at Umberslade for treatment at various times. Dr Johnson moved back to Malvern to Ellerslie House and, following the Battle of Scutari in the Crimea, Florence again sought rest and treatment from Dr. Johnson at Ellerslie House where she stayed for a month.

Cora Weaver pointed out that in the twenty years between 1848 and 1868 Florence Nightingale visited Malvern for treatment on forty four occasions!

When hearing of the appalling conditions that she and her nurses faced – floors awash with blood, limbs amputated without any anaesthetic, no toilets and, what blankets there were, washed in filthy river water by local women - it is, perhaps, unsurprising that she became ill with overwork and suffered from acute exhaustion. It is also suggested that she contracted Brucellosis during her time in the Crimea. Hindsight in our current age might also suggest that she was suffering

from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder for which she sought the peace and tranquillity of Malvern to aid her recovery. This was a remarkable and unusual talk given by a very eloquent speaker who finished her talk displaying a Turkish 'lantern' similar to the one Florence might have used as she nursed the wounded in the Crimea.

MORTARIUM AT ALCESTER HERITAGE CENTRE: You may have seen in the local press that a uniquely intact Roman artefact was recently found in an Alcester garden. What was, apparently a rather distressed, pottery bowl that was being used as a bird bath, is in fact a Roman 'mortarium' remarkably intact except for a slightly chipped rim and probably made not far away at Mancetter. This amazing artefact is now, where it should be, on public display in Alcester's wonderful Roman Museum.

Entrance is free and the museum is open each day apart from Sundays and Tuesdays – so do go along to see it and the other Roman exhibits, all of which were found in or around Alcester.

REFRESHMENT ROTA: Many thanks to all those who have put themselves on the refreshment rota for the coming months, into 2017. We are still short of two or three people to fill the remaining gaps so we will be passing the rota round again at November's meeting. Please note, **you will not be required** to purchase supplies for the evening. Your only duty will be to pour and serve drinks to the members under the watchful eyes of Margaret Shelton and Brian Bickley, who will always be on hand.

NEXT MEETING: Our next meeting on Wednesday 9th November will feature Andrew Lound whose talk is entitled **When the Lights Went Out – Birmingham Goes to War**. Andrew Lound is a very experienced speaker on a wide variety of subjects and this talk should be of particular interest locally. Meetings are held at St. Benedict's 6th Form Centre, Kinwarton Road and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome to attend.

SUE FISHER