

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015



Haselor, Main
Street, circa.
1908. (ADLHS
Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

SEPTEMBER MEETING: The focus of our most recent talk in September was our County town of Warwick, known for the beauty of its Georgian architecture and elegant town centre. Our speaker, Dr. Sylvia Pinches told the story of the great fire of 1694 which devastated the centre of the town in a few short hours. Like many similar towns, Warwick contained many medieval buildings constructed largely from timber and with thatched roofs, materials which were like tinder in the face of a fire.

Dr Pinches told how the fire began at about 2.00pm on the 6th September and lasted for about six hours during which time the fire caused immense damage to the buildings at the heart of the town. The fire was fanned by quite strong winds and made its way through Castle Street, Market Street and High Street and was eventually brought to a halt by the half metre thick walls of what is now known to us as the Lord Leycester Hospital in Jury Street.

The immense damage to buildings in the centre of the town necessitated large scale rebuilding over a period of several years during which new rules and regulations were introduced governing the construction and safety of buildings, the width of streets and the materials used.

Dr Pinches pointed out that the beautiful post fire buildings which we see today can largely be credited to the architects Francis and William Smith. The brothers joined forces on the reconstruction of St Mary's Church which had been severely damaged in the fire. The brothers had a lasting impact on the town and passed on the tradition of architecture to their two sons.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS: As mentioned in last month's Newsletter, the Society took part in the nationwide Heritage Open Days event on Sunday 13th September. In partnership with the Church House Development Trust we mounted a photographic display entitled **Alcester's Pubs - Then and Now** in the upper

room at Church House itself. The display, put together using many photographs from the ADLHS archives including several new images, provided a fascinating look at the social life of the town both in the past and currently. Together with displays from Alcester Roman Heritage Centre and Alcester Heritage Network, a wide cross-section of people were attracted to Church House to view the work that had taken place to restore the building whilst leaving its architectural heritage intact. Our photographic display drew many appreciative comments and we were able to sell a number of our publications. Using a 'clicker' to record visitor numbers, we were able to count some 92 visitors during the afternoon, though, as one of our 'clickers' broke and had to be replaced, the actual number of visitors was probably more like 100. This was an excellent result for all concerned and what with fine weather and the Alcester Silver Band playing on the Church Green, a very pleasant afternoon was had by all.

NEXT MEETING: Our next meeting on Wednesday October 14th will feature as speaker, Dr Gillian White of Leicester University.

Dr White's talk will focus on **Mary Queen of Scots** who became a monarch at six days old and by the age of twenty-five had lost three kingdoms, three husbands and would never see her only child again! Meetings are held at St Benedict's Sixth Form Centre and commence at 8.00pm.

All are welcome to attend.

SUE FISHER