

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2015



The old Globe Hotel, known as Globe Corner & now replaced by a traffic island.

(ADLHS Collection)

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk

AUGUST MEETING: The subject of our illustrated talk for the August meeting fell into two distinct parts during which, our speaker for the evening, Mrs Gay Hill explored the subject of electoral reform and the struggle for the vote for women in the West Midlands.

Mrs Hill explained that the nineteenth century was one of momentous reform and representation of the population in parliament. This was a time of the, so called, 'rotten boroughs' wherein the representation of the people was, to say the least, uneven. This arose when large, but sparsely populated areas would, sometimes, be represented in parliament by up to three MPs. Conversely, some of the large cities like Manchester and Birmingham might have only one MP.

This was also the era of the Hampden Clubs which eventually led to Chartism. These clubs were political campaigning and debating societies which were formed throughout England in the early 19th century, particularly in the Midlands and the Northern counties, and were closely associated with popular movements for electoral and political reform following the Napoleonic wars.

The election campaign following the Reform Act of 1832 was characterised by much unrest and rioting and in nearby Stratford there were reports of disorder and riots. The militia from Coventry were sent for and the Riot Act was read.

Mrs Hill's talk focused in the second half of her talk on the role of suffragettes in securing the vote for women.

Mrs Hill was dressed in the costume and colours of a suffragette during the talk. She also explained the significance of the purple, green and white colours which came to represent the movement – i.e. purple, green and white which appeared on their banners. Purple represented dignity; green hope; and white, purity.

A Society for Women's Suffrage was formed in Birmingham and particularly involved the Quakers of the city at the outset.

By 1903 there were branches throughout the West Midlands in Coventry, Redditch, Warwick, in addition to Birmingham itself. In 1907 a Stratford branch of the Society was formed and Christabel Pankhurst herself visited the town to address the members.

This was a wide ranging talk which covered many aspects of political reform and particular interest was added by the focus on the Midlands itself during this momentous era.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS: The Society will be mounting a photographic exhibition at Church House, in the centre of Alcester, on Sunday 13th September as part of the nationwide **Heritage Open Days** weekend. The exhibition is entitled **Alcester Pubs – Then and Now** and will feature much new material to augment the many existing photographs of Alcester pubs taken throughout the years, which have been gleaned from our archives and which provide a further, fascinating insight into our town viewed from both 'then and now'.

The whole of the now fully refurbished, 15th century Church House will be open to the public with guided tours of the building taking place throughout the afternoon. Our photographic display will be on the first floor, an area which really highlights the original structure of the building.

NEXT MEETING: Our next meeting on Wednesday 9th September will include a welcome return visit from Dr Sylvia Pinches, well known historian and author of several books on various historical subjects. Dr Pinches is currently a freelance researcher and writer combining work for the Victoria County History Trust in Herefordshire with being a lecturer for the WEA. Her talk on this occasion is entitled **Rebuilding Warwick after the Great Fire of 1694**. This fire, which lasted for over six hours, destroyed many of the old, timber framed buildings with flames which were fanned by high winds and very dry conditions.

Much of the centre of the town was completely destroyed and the rebuilding, which eventually produced the town we know today, will be the focus of Dr Pinches' talk.

Meetings are held at St Benedict's Sixth Form Centre, Kinwarton Road and commence at 8.00pm. All are welcome.

SUE FISHER