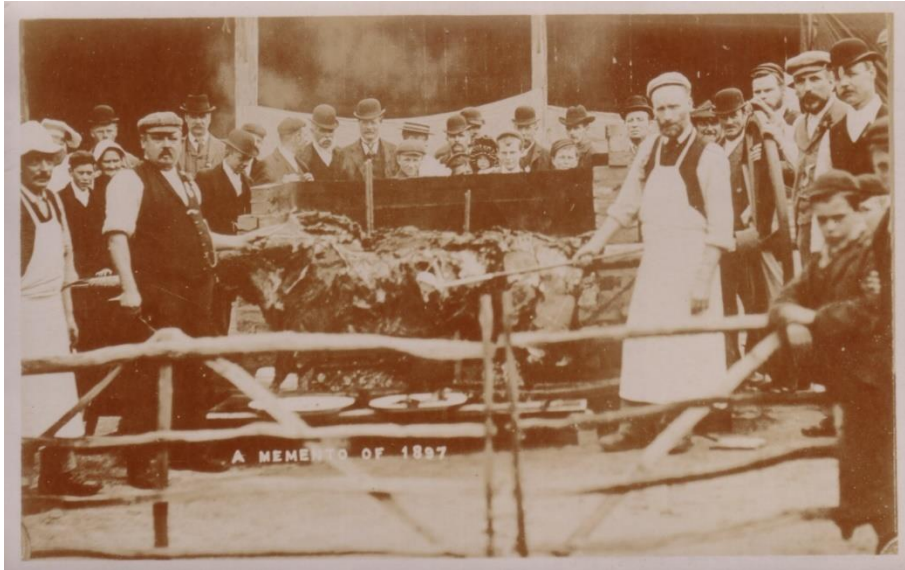


ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2024

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



Postcard of the ox roast at Alcester Mop in 1897. Probably outside the Red Horse in Henley Street. (From ADG Collection)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN:

Alcester's Roman Heritage Centre is celebrating its 20th anniversary on Saturday 6th July 10.30am – 4.30pm. Everyone's invited and it's all FREE! More details at www.romanalcester.org

Forward Announcement: The **National Heritage Open Days** this year will be on the weekend of 14th/15th September. We will again be putting on an exhibition in Church House and selling publications. More details later.
Alan Godfrey 07818 633001

!!!! STOP PRESS NEWS !!!!

To celebrate the Society's
50th Anniversary

our keynote lecture will be:

**ANCESTORS: A HISTORY OF
BRITAIN THROUGH BURIALS**

presented by

Professor Alice Roberts

Academic, TV Presenter & Author
on Saturday 7th September 7.30pm
at the Greig Hall

Details of tickets to follow

THE LAST MEETING

Warwick the Kingmaker: Richard Neville (1428-1471) by John Reid
Richard Neville was the eldest son of the 5th Earl of Salisbury. Following an advantageous marriage to Lady Anne Beauchamp, daughter of Richard Beauchamp 13th Earl of

Warwick, in 1449 he inherited his father in law's title as well as an inheritance of a large fortune and land. At this time King Henry VI fell ill and the Duke of Somerset, a favourite of the king, virtually took control of government. Warwick found himself in dispute over land with Somerset and decided to throw in his lot with Richard, Duke of York (who was married to Warwick's aunt, Cecily Neville). The subsequent struggle for royal control became known as the War of the Roses, fought between the two rival branches of the royal family, the House of Lancaster (red rose) and House of York (white rose).

From this conflict, he gained the strategically valuable post of Captain of Calais, a position that benefited him greatly in the years to come. The political conflict later turned into full-scale rebellion, where in battle York was slain, as was Warwick's father Salisbury. York's son, however, later triumphed with Warwick's assistance, and was crowned King Edward IV. Edward initially ruled with Warwick's support, but the two later fell out over foreign policy and the king's choice to marry Elizabeth Woodville. After a failed plot to crown Edward's brother, George, Duke of Clarence, Warwick instead restored Henry VI to the throne. The triumph was short-lived, however: on 14 April 1471, Warwick was defeated by Edward at the Battle of Barnet, and killed.

Warwick's historical legacy has been a matter of much dispute. Historical opinion has alternated between seeing him as self-centred and rash, and regarding him as a victim of the whims of an ungrateful king. It is generally agreed, however, that in his own time, he enjoyed great popularity in all layers of society, and that he was skilled at appealing to popular sentiments for political support.

Alan Godfrey



Arms of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and Earl of Salisbury 1428-1471

THE ALCESTER ANNUAL STATUTE

This article appeared in the 'Alcester Chronicle' of 9th October 1869:

"The Alcester annual statute, or "mop" as it is vulgarly termed, took place on Tuesday last, and, as usual, a fat ox and a fat pig were roasted on the occasion, the former in front of the church gates under the superintendence of Mr William Russen, mine host of the "Turk's Head", and the latter in front of "The Talbot", by Mr James Findon, the host of that old-established inn. It would appear that those who attended the statute came in a hearty mood, at least we think that we may safely draw such an inference from the fact that when night closed in, the ox presented but a very faint shadow of his former self, all that remained of the goodly proportioned beast of the morning being a framework of charred bones; his porcine majesty had evidently shared the same fate, and as our remarks on the ox hold good in his case, we will content ourselves by recapitulating them in the simple yet comprehensive phrase "ditto". In the less substantial department of the programme that of amusement - there was a decided falling off, the "performing fish", and the "strongest one-armed man in the world" (whose immense muscular feats twelve months ago were witnessed with admiration and awe by a gaping crowd of rustics), making themselves conspicuous by their absence. There were, however, a profusion of cake and toy stalls, machines for trying one's lifting powers, machines for ascertaining the force of one's striking powers, upon which (so the young lady in charge eloquently remarked), to practise the "noble" and we think we may add "dignified", art of self-defence; electric batteries for imparting a shock to the nervous system, and, indeed, it was shocking to look upon the faces of those under the influence of the electric fluid, their contortions and horrid grimaces being enough to unsettle the nerves of the timid onlooker for many a day; not the least attraction among the amusements, if we may judge from the patronage bestowed both by the juveniles and the young of both sexes, were the hobby-horses, without which a "mop" would not look like a "mop" and would certainly not be appreciated by the young, who look upon a "mount" upon this auspicious day as quite a matter of course. Beside these attractions, there were several rifle galleries, and many other minor sources of diversion; Bacchus, however, and we may say "as usual", defied the outdoor amusements to rob him of his votaries, who filled his temples, and danced and sang to their hearts' content until time or inclination called them to their respective homes. Servants were plentiful. although but very few of the more respectable class attended; those who were present consisted chiefly of juveniles, among whom but a small amount of hiring was done. With reference to the ox roast it has hitherto been the custom to charge 1s 4d per lb for the beef, but this year it was determined to charge 1s only, and the change was found to be beneficial, as nearly the whole was disposed of on the first day, whereas on previous occasions a considerable quantity remained unsold and had to be disposed of on the second or third day at a reduced price. But a small amount of subscriptions were obtained this year in aid of the roast, but as the beast did not cost so much as usual, and the expenses were likewise somewhat curtailed, there was found to be a balance in hand available for future years: the following is a detailed statement of the receipts and expenditure:- cost of the ox, £10 10s: H Smith, butcher, 5s, E Stiles, carver, 8s 6d, spit turner, 3s, Mr W Hunt, builder, including hire of boards 7s 6d, bricks and building, 3s, coals and wood, 15s, refreshments to men employed, 10s, printing bills of announcement, crier, postage etc., 19s 3d, new iron work, 2s 6d, carriage paid on hide, 6d, deficiency last year, 7s 9½d, total expenditure, £14 12 6d. Against which has to be placed on the other side of the account, subscriptions in aid, £4 16s; meat sold at roast £8 15s 7½d; meat sold second day including offal and dripping, £1 16s 0½d; hide 11s 9d; fat, 5s 5d; tripe and heels 4s; tongue, 2s 6d; total receipts £16 11s 4d; balance remaining in hand, £1 19s 3½d."

On 19th October 1878 this notice appeared in the 'Alcester Chronicle':

"The second Statute, or "runaway mop" (*sic*), for Alcester was held on Tuesday, and a considerable amount of hiring was


done at the rooms set apart for this purpose at the Working Men's Club."

It seems that like Stratford, Alcester used to have a 'runaway mop'. This is the only reference I have found to this event; of course, the mop was still a hiring fair at this time. The Working Men's Club is thought to have been the Stone House in Alcester's High Street, formerly the 'Three Horseshoes'. This was mentioned in the Stratford Herald in 1873. A reading room was provided and a room for 'harmless amusements' (chess, bagatelle, dominoes). Restricted ale was allowed with conditions 'as liberal as working men can expect'. Later the Stone House became a coffee house, presumably after the Working Men's Club closed or moved premises.

Alan Godfrey



Summer Outing to **RAGLEY & HALL**



Take advantage of this rare opportunity to enjoy a guided tour of this magnificent Palladian mansion, not normally open to the public, by kind permission of the Marquis of Hertford. At the end of the tour we will be provided with refreshments in the tearoom.

Wednesday 10th July
Meeting at the Hall at 2.00 pm
Tickets £18

Available at the 12th June meeting
or by email at ticket@alauweb.uk or
tel. 07773293968

**PLEASE BOOK YOUR PLACE ON THIS SELF-DRIVE VISIT
BY EMAILING ticket@alauweb.uk OR CALLING
07773-293968 - PAYMENT CAN BE MADE ON THE DAY**

FUTURE MEETINGS:

- 10th July – Afternoon Visit to Ragley Hall (See above)
- 14th August – The History of Feckenham Forest – Mike Sharpe
- 7th September – A History of Britain through Burials – Prof Alice Roberts (at the Grieg Hall)
- 11th September – History with a Dividend: the Story of the Co-op – Ned Williams

NEXT MEETING AT ST BENEDICT'S:

Our next talk will be held at the **Sixth Form Centre, St Benedict's High School, Kinwarton Road, Alcester B49 6PX** on **Wednesday 14th AUGUST 2024 at 7.30pm**. The talk is: **"The History of Feckenham Forest"** and the speaker is **Mike Sharpe**.

Alan Godfrey

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