

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



Advertising postcard of c1916 from the Stag at Redhill-in-Arden (now trading as the Piston Club). This pub is thought to date from c1750s when an early reference shows it as the Buck's Head, this name shortly after became the Stag's Head. Many of the publicans were also farmers. Harold Poole (whose name appears on the card) was the landlord from 1916 to 1921. In recent years the pub seems to be known as 'The Stag'. In the 2010s it remained closed for a considerable length of time before refurbishment and reopening as the Piston Club.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN:



Heritage Open Days – Help needed at Church House

As you'll have seen in the last ADLHS Newsletter, we are once again working with the St Nicholas PCC to open Church House during the national Heritage Open Days event on the weekend of 13-14th September. It's a Grade II Listed building, and behind the early 20th-century frontage is a fascinating timber-framed medieval structure.

The building will be open from 12 noon to 4pm both days. We will have displays in the upper room (where our archive is kept) and the main room downstairs, and also take the opportunity to promote the society and sell our publications. The Town Hall, the Baptist and St Nicholas churches, and the Roman Museum are also taking part in the event.

Our Archivist and *Local Past* editor Ian Greig will prepare and set up the displays in advance, but we also need volunteer stewards to keep an eye on things, meet-and-greet visitors and answer questions when the building is open to the public.

Past experience is that dividing each afternoon into two sessions of two hours each seems to work well (12-2pm, and 2-4pm). If we have too many volunteers, extra help is always useful or we could perhaps arrange a few one-hour sessions. It's a pleasant and sociable way to spend an hour or two!

If you would be interested in helping on either of the days, please email Ian (editor@alcesterhistory.org.uk) and let him know which session(s) you could be available for. If you have already contacted us after my earlier email, there's no need to respond to this – we'll be in touch.

More detailed information will be available to help stewards on the day, including ADLHS membership forms, crib-sheets to answer likely questions about Church House, details and a map of other venues open, etc. If you have any questions, please email Ian or speak to him at the ADLHS meeting in September.

Alan Godfrey

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LAST MONTH'S MEETING:

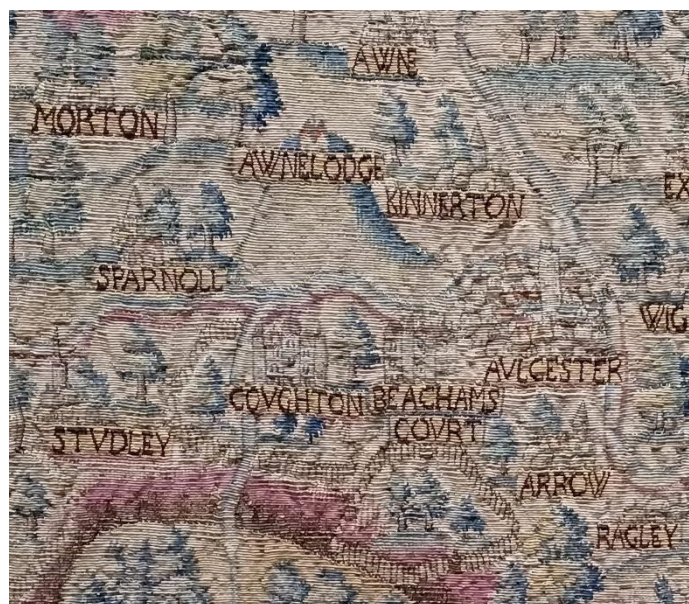
The speaker at August meeting was **Maggie Wood**, formerly Keeper of Social History for Warwickshire Museum Service, who explained the history of the three sixteenth-century tapestries created for Ralph Sheldon (1537-1613) of Weston House, near Long Compton.

Sheldon came from a very wealthy Roman Catholic family owning land in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, including Beoley and Skilts (near Redditch). Ralph's father, William Sheldon acquired land at Weston and the house was built by the father and his son and was completed by 1580 (William had died in 1570). Ralph commissioned a set of four large tapestry maps. Although, William Sheldon had established a tapestry workshop at Barcheston, set up by Richard Hyckes (the Arrasmaker to Queen Elizabeth), it is unclear if the maps were produced there or in London, by Flemish craftsmen. The four maps: Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire were made to hang together and stretched 23.5 metres in width. The designs were based on Christopher Saxton's book of maps of the counties of England finished in 1579, which Sheldon must have purchased. The Warwickshire map is the only one to have survived in complete form and gives a representation of the Forest of Arden as Shakespeare would have known it. The orientation of the map is unusual as north is to the left of the map and south to the right. As well as physical features, all towns and villages are shown, as well as many of the country houses that had connections with the Sheldon family.

The border of this map was replaced in the seventeenth century, but while it was being restored in 2011 part of the original border was revealed with the vivid colours that had faded in the main map over the centuries. The surviving parts of other three county maps are currently held by Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Some damage to the maps may have occurred after Weston House was besieged during the Civil War and all the valuables were removed. The history of the maps is difficult to follow after 1781, when the Sheldon family sold the house contents and moved out. Horace Walpole acquired the maps, and he bequeathed them to Lord Harcourt, and in turn they passed to the Archbishop of York. Later, in 1897 the Warwickshire tapestry was displayed by the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. In the early 1960s this map was put up for sale and after a major fundraising effort by Miss Morris and with help from Courtaulds, it was bought by Warwickshire Museum Service. It is still on display in the Market House Museum in Warwick.

Maggie Wood was thanked on behalf of the Society by the chairman for her excellent, informative talk on this Tudor treasure.

Alan Godfrey



This section of Sheldon's Warwickshire map shows the area around Alcester [spelt 'AULCESTER']. Also visible:

'KINNERTON' [Kinwarton] 'BEACHAMS COURT' [Beauchamp's Court] 'AWNE LODGE' [Alne Lodge] 'SPARNOLL' [Spernal] 'AWNE' [Great Alne] 'RAGLEY' 'ARROW' 'STUDLEY' 'MORTON' [Bagot].

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S AN INVENTORY, ACTUALLY (Part 2 – continued from the July newsletter)

From the hundreds of inventories which we in the Society have studied between 1550 and 1750, here are a few of the most interesting entries from the parishes of Alcester, Haselor, Oversley and Spernal, with a reminder that they stand out just because they are so rare

Glass - We take glass for granted. Our forefathers did not. In inventories between 1597 and 1622 there are six cases in Alcester where the windows are included among the tenants' assets. This probably tells us that sometime during the tenants' occupation they had replaced the shuttered windows with glass ones. After 1622 there are no more mentions, for from that time glazed windows, now more common, would be seen as part of the normal fabric of the house.

Clothes - Normally it is "wearing apparel". But in two instances some details are given. Simon Bellers of Alcester, a tanner, had an inventory worth £104 in 1567; this included a velvet night cap, his "best capp", a taffety doublet, a black gown bound about with black fringe and a damask jerkin with velvet. In 1627 Robert Wilcox left a cloak, gown, jerkin, doublet and hose.

Weapons - Between 1588 and 1684 there are occasional mentions of swords, daggers and rapiers: mostly Alcester. There are ten cases of guns after the Civil War, but only one before it. The three instances of bows and arrows are between 1588 and 1639.

Oddments - Apart from occasional silver spoons, there is little of this metal about. 60 oz. of it in 1661 is in a large inventory of £951 and in 1680 Cornelius Cox of Alcester had a silver cup. About the same time Charles Johnson of the same town left nine gold rings. Silver and gold objects are very rare. Here are some articles which have only been noticed once each: - Inkhorn (1604 Oversley), Apple roaster (1671 Alcester), Sugar, fruit and spice (1641 Alcester), Partridge net (1670 Alcester), Bread grater, Constable's staff, rat-trap, washing stock.

G. Edward Saville

[This article first appeared in Local Past – Spring 1984]

FUTURE MEETINGS:

- 10th September – Sulgrave Manor and the Washington Family – Martin Sirot-Smith
- 8th October – Umberslade Baptist Church & the Muntz Family – Peter Coulls
- 12th November - The Witchcraft Murder on Meon Hill – Adam Wood
- 17th December – Memories of Castle Maudslay – Doug Badger

OUR NEXT MEETING:

Our next meeting will be held at the **GREIG HALL, Kinwarton Road, Alcester B49 6AD** on **Wednesday 10th September 2025** at **7.30pm**. This will be: **"Sulgrave Manor and the Washington Family"** and the speaker is **Martin Sirot-Smith**.

Alan Godfrey

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