

ALCESTER & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2020

www.alcesterhistory.org.uk



White Lion Inn,
Evesham Street
before the pub
was rebuilt in
1934.

[ADLHS Archive]

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

There seems to be no news on when indoor public meetings can resume and it may be that the Society will be unable to meet again until the start of 2021. I will keep you informed.

As a repository for local history information we would like record the 'lockdown' and the effect of COVID-19 in Alcester and district. If you have any documents or photographs that would help future generations to understand this most unusual situation in this area, please let me know.

Also, if you have any suggestions for subjects you would like me to include in this newsletter, please email me. I hope everyone will continue to take care, keep safe and I look forward to seeing you at a meeting again soon.

Alan Godfrey

BEAUCHAMP COURT

This building is 3/4 mile north west of Alcester Church, on the road towards Birmingham; it marks the site of the ancient manor house of Alcester. The present building is of mid-19th century construction and is now divided into flats, though previously it did duty as a farmhouse. Behind the house is a moat, which enclosed the original manor house; the Corbetts and the Fitzherberts held the manor up to 1269, but whether there was a house here is not known. It is fairly certain that from 1271 the Beauchamps lived here and Dugdale tells us that in 1341 Giles de Beauchamp got a charter to fortify the Court with stone walls and battlements; the same historian also says that the place had a private chapel and that c1540 Fulke Greville (the Beauchamp male line having died out) enlarged his manor house with stone and timber from the dissolved Alcester Priory. For some reason the Grevilles allowed the fabric to deteriorate over the next 60 years for in 1601 Fulke Greville II wrote to Cecil "I have a house much older than I it threateneth every day to fall upon us". And eventually this is clearly what it did, for the Grevilles acquired Warwick Castle and went to live there. By 1690 there cannot have been a lot of the old house left for the Warwick Castle accounts show the selling off of materials. References to Beauchamp Court after 1700 undoubtedly refer to a farm house with tenants of the Earl of Warwick living in, probably composed of the remains of the old house or an incorporation of some of the outbuildings. A timber-framed barn is all that now remains of any of the older buildings, though this has been altered by brick

infiling. The Hertfords obtained the manor in the early 1800s, including the site of Beauchamp Court and it was they who had the present house built; the Victoria County History (volume 3) suggests that it was built with materials from the manor house at Pophills in Salford Priors when that place was destroyed in 1848. As the present house is brick-built, this suggestion is open to debate. The origins of Beauchamp Court, including its age, can probably now only be discovered by archaeological means, viz. excavation of the moated site.

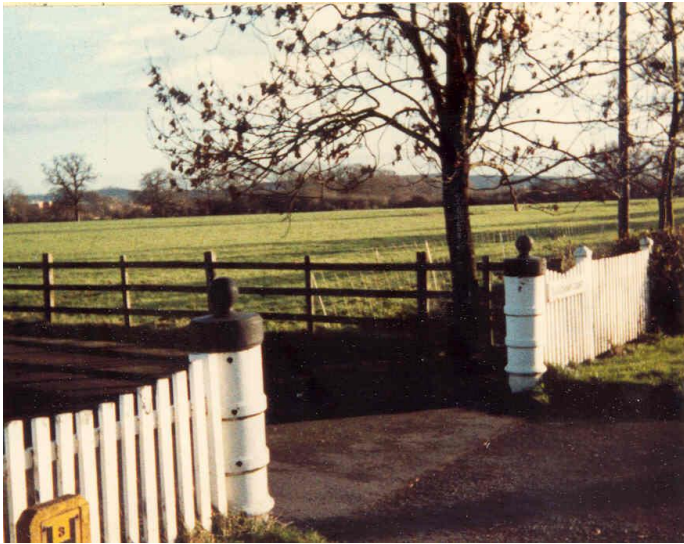
G. Edward Saville

[Taken from LOCAL PAST Winter 1980]



JOHN SHAKLES

It is with sadness I have to report the death of John Shakles on 15th June. John had been a member of the Society for more than thirty years. He was a native of Studley and a former pupil of Alcester Grammar School. One of the many articles he wrote for Local Past was a humorous account of his first job at the Alcester Co-operative Society in 1958. John had a wry sense of humour and a ready wit. Most of our members will remember him for his book stall, which he ran with his partner, Karen, at our meetings. He served on the committee for many years and as vice-chairman for several of those. He will be greatly missed.



The entrance to the drive to Beauchamp Court. The gate posts are the original gate posts from the turnpike gate which stood nearby, attached to the toll-house in the junction of the Droitwich and Birmingham roads (where the large traffic roundabout stands today).



The toll-house that stood on Birmingham Road was erected in 1839 (known in the Trust's minutes as the Alcester Turnpike House) and was demolished in 1950s.



The Arrow toll-house showing very similar gate posts to those standing outside Beauchamp Court. No doubt the turnpike trust acquired the posts for all the toll gates from the same supplier. These two gates blocked the Evesham road and the Worcester road. The toll-house has managed to survive to the present day.

WORTHIES OF THE AREA – ‘SQUIRE’ CHEAPE

The Hemmings of Great Alne became successful in the Redditch needle trade and acquired estates in Worcestershire, particularly Bentley; to these they added a good portion of Haselor. Richard Hemming, died 1891, left an heiress, Maude, but she is remembered under her married name of Cheape. Everyone in Haselor called her ‘Squire’, the title relating to the parish of Bentley. She seems to have been very fond of Haselor and her visits, according to old inhabitants, were rather like royal progresses. For one thing, before World War I, she visited the village in a motor car, an event in itself. The children cheered when it came and those who remembered to curtsey or touch their caps to the grand lady got the reward of a shilling (5p). Mrs Roberts of Haselor, who died in 1985, said ‘We met her on every possible occasion’. The squire financed parties at Christmas for the children and the old people. But Mrs Cheape’s greatest delight was to bring over from Bentley her beagles; she descended with her retinue on Haselor Lodge (at the foot of Red Hill), one of the Bentley estate properties, and usually stayed there for a couple of weeks.

The parish church benefitted from the Lady Squire’s generosity; there are memorials there to her family, the Hemmings, but a good deal of the church furnishings were given by her, including the organ.

The ‘Squire’ died in 1919 and there are many details of her origins and her personality in the book “The Squire of Bentley” written by her daughter, Maude.

G. Edward Saville

[Taken from *Local Past Summer 1985*]

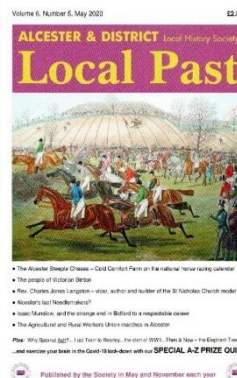
‘Squire’
Cheape at
Lower
Bentley,
near
Redditch



THE MAY 2020 EDITION OF ‘LOCAL PAST’

The latest edition of LP is still available. Local Past is available from MACE - Hills Retail (formerly Ross’ Garage), PSW in Alcester and PSW in Studley. We can also deliver your copy **free** in Alcester, Bidford or Studley (postcode areas B49, B50 & B80) or by post. Go onto our website to order your copy or call Sue Fisher on 01789 763121. The price remains a bargain at £2.00 (plus postage if needed £1.00)

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