

ALCESTER

A neat market town, and place of great antiquity, 25 miles from Birmingham, 16 from Warwick, 8 from Stratford, 10 from Evesham, 13 from Bromsgrove and 20 from Worcester, to all such places there are excellent turnpike roads, 8 miles from Henley in Arden and 102 from London. It is situated in a pleasant and fertile vale, near the conflux of the Alne and the Arrow. The Roman Way called Ykenil Street, passed through or near this place and many coins and roman bricks continue to be found.

There is a considerable market for corn &c. on Tuesdays and three fairs, on the Tuesday before Lady-day; the 18th May and the 17th October, for horses, cattle, sheep &c. The Earl of Warwick is lord of the manor and patron of the rectory, and in the year 1765, generously surrendered the tolls of the market and fairs for the benefit of the town and country.

It is governed by a steward, deputy steward, two bailiffs and constables, who are elected annually at the court leet &c. of the lord of the manor.

The church is a neat edifice, situate near the centre of the town, and the present incumbent is the Rev. James Wilmot, D. D. who is also rector of Barton on the Heath, in this county, where he resides. There are also three meeting houses, viz. Presbyterians, Anabaptists and Quakers. Walter Newport of Holdenby, in the county of Northampton, Gent. 34 Eliz. Gave a sum to buy lands or an annuity to found and endow a school; here are also eight almshouses for aged men and women with suitable allowances; and many other charities to the poor of this parish.

The principle manufactory here is needle-making, which affords employment to many families. The chief inns are the Angel, Red Horse, Swan and Bear.

Post- Through Stratford to and from London every day and through Worcester to the west of England three times a week.

Stages - Three stage -wagons pass through every week from Mr Rufford's warehouse in Stourbridge, to the Bull and Mouth Inn, London.

Principle seats in the neighbourhood are, Ragley, the seat of Lord Beauchamp. 1 mile, Hewell, seat of the Earl of Plymouth, 8 miles, Coughton Court, seat of Sir Robert Throckmorton, 2 miles and Cookhill, seat of John Fortescue Esq. 2 miles.

NEEDLEMAKING IN WARWICKSHIRE – STUDLEY AND ALCESTER

The Parish of Studley is noted for the manufacture of needles, sewing machine needles, bodkins, fishhooks and fishing tackle. This industry at one time gave employment to over 800 hands. The increase in trade brought the need for more houses to be erected during the mid 1800s. Redditch also played an important role in the needle industry, and although records are available and are interconnected with Studley and Alcester, Redditch is technically in Worcestershire, which means that we can only print the Warwickshire information. However, if any members are interested they can obtain copies of material related to Redditch in exchange for SAE.

Warwick County Record Office have over 300 records relating to this industry which can be found in catalogue ref. CR 3097, we can therefore, only show a very small selection here

From 'History and Description of Needle makers' 1866 WRO

About 1700, a mill worked by horses, was established at Studley, for pointing and scouring needles; soon after a mill of this kind was set up at Sambourne, a village near Studley, carried on by a family called **Biddle**, who taught Richard Hemming the art of needle making, the founder of the celebrated firm of Hemming & Sons of Redditch.

The horse mills were in course of time superseded by waterpower in the old flourmills on the river Arrow, parts of which were fitted up by John **Alcock** of Alcester, for pointing and scouring needles.

About 1750, some needle makers in this locality began to aspire to the dignity of manufacturers. **Mackenzie** appears to have been the first to establish a needle manufactory in Whitechapel, London, but it cannot be determined whether any needles were made throughout at his establishment.

It is quite certain that **Mackenzie** was supplied with needles in an unfinished state, by Charles **Rawlins** of Alcester, which were finished in Whitechapel. **Mackenzie** introduced some improvements in the finishing of his needles, which brought them into request, and **Mackenzie's** Whitechapel needles obtained a pre-eminence over all other makes.

Mackenzie, despite fame, was embarrassed and was about to join the **Connells** of Limerick, who were needle makers in that city when he was overtaken at Liverpool by his creditor Charles **Rawlins**.

Mackenzie exclaimed ' I did not expect to see you here'.

Rawlins replied ' *But I expected to find you here and I must be paid or you shall not go to Ireland*'.

Mackenzie replied ' *Gold and Silver I have none – here is my Money-Spinner and Family Bible. If you will have them and use them well, you will be alright for time and eternity*'.

Some arrangement was entered into for payment of the debt. Mackenzie did not go to Ireland, but returned to London, and was supplied with needles by John **Shrimpton** of Long Crendon. This was a great disappointment to the Connell's who removed to Redditch in 1780, when needles ceased to be made in Ireland.

The business of **Mackenzie** gradually declined; he could not compete with the Alcester needle makers. One of the tools obtained by Rawlins was called, by **Mackenzie**, his 'money spinner', which was used in burnishing the eyes of needles.

It gave them a bright appearance, hence the term 'silver eyed'. The information **Rawlins** received from **Mackenzie**, enabled him to make more superior needles than any other maker, he also silvered the eyes for other manufacturers, for which he received one shilling per thousand, or about 10/- per hour.

James **Waterhouse** took **Rawlins** 6,000 needles to silver one dark night, he then placed a ladder to the window where **Rawlins** worked and discovered the process of silvering eyes, which he made public.

The Alcester needle makers became jealous of the fame of the London needles and labelled their common qualities with Whitechapel labels, by this means, and the greater facility for making needles in Warwickshire, needles soon ceased to be made in London.

The Alcester manufacturers began to make sale and packing needles, a branch of the trade almost exclusively confined to Long Crendon. The Long Crendon needle makers not being progressive, looked with contempt on what they called new fangled ways of needles and continued to make them in the 'good old way', handed down to them through a long line of Greenings and Shrimptons, from the old Christopher Greening, and, as a matter of course, their trade declined, and the prosperous state of needle making in Warwickshire attracted the most energetic needle makers from all parts, bringing with them useful contrivances connected with their art, and thus this manufacture became concentrated on the boundaries of Warwick and Worcester.

The first Long Crendon needle makers who came into this locality, settled at Alcester and were employed by William **Mascoul**, a manufacturer in that town.

Around 1785, Michael **Morrall**, who had been taught the art by his uncle, Charles **Rawlins**, removed from Alcester to Washford Mill, Studley and entered into partnership of his brother Abel and John Archer, their brother in law.

The firm's order books show that needles were ordered to be made with the latter C, - this had been the mark of the celebrated Whitechapel needles.

By 1790, two and a half million needles were made per week in this district, one million of which were made by **Morrall, Archer & Morrall** of Washford Mill, Studley. Many improvements were made by this firm in the art of needle making.

In 1793, Michael Morrall made some experiments in drilling the eyes, the firm then engaged Charles **Davis**, a watchmaker of Alcester, to drill needles for them. They were introduced into the market but the price was too high.

Needle Manufacturers mid 1870s

STUDLEY

Mrs. Henry **Beckett**; John **Chatterley**, *Littlewood Green*; James **Cottrell**, sen.; Henry **Craner**; David **Evans**; George **Field**; George & John **Gee**; William **Hall** & Co.; John **Hill**; William **Horton**, *The Mount*; Abel **Morrall**, *Priory Mill*; Francis **Morell**; Richard **Orme**; James **Pardoe** & Co.; Charles **Parker**; Charles **Rimmer**; **Shrimpton & Hooper**; John **Shrimpton** & Son.; William **Valve** & Sons; Joseph **Watton**; Henry **Wilkes** & Co.

ALCESTER

Needle Finishers

Thomas **Bowkett**, *Church Street*; Richard **Hawtin**, *Evesham Street*; George **Savage**, *Church Street*; James **Stiles**, *Priory Street*;

Needle Manufacturers

Wm. **Allwood** & Sons, *Henley Street*; Thos. **Cook**, *Malt Mill Lane*; Stephen **Cox**, **Eagle Needle Works**; Wm. **Hall** & Co., *Birmingham Road and at Studley*; **Hayes, Crossley** & Co., *Henley Street*; Joseph **Harrison** & Son, *Priory Street*, John **Simmons**, *Bleachfield Street*; Henry **Walker**, *Church Street*.

Needle Makers

James **Allcock**, *Evesham Street*; Charles **Anker**; William **Currier**; John **Dance**; Charles Henry **Doddeswell**, *Bleachfield Street*; William **Hall**, *Bleachfield Street*; Wm. **Haywood**, *Henley Street*; Henry and Thomas **Skinner**; John **Watson**.

Main Amalgamations in Needle Industries Ltd.

Henry Milward & Sons

Amalgamated Needles & Fish Hooks
(Halls)

(Milwards)

Henry Milward & Sons Ltd.
John James
John English
J. Warner
W. Barleet
P. Wadham
Wm. Avery
J. Hemming

Wm. Hall & Co.
Thomas Harper
H. Wilks & Co
m. Vale
Paice Ltd.
A. G. Baylis & Sons
S. Thomas & Sons

*Amalgamated 1930. Renamed for trading purposes - English Needle & Fishing Tackle Co. Ltd. (ENTACO).
Renamed 1946 Needle Industries. 1973 Entire share capital purchased by Coats Patons Ltd.*

ALCESTER. TOWN LANDS

Ref. DR 360

(names of people mentioned)

/140 George **Hill** of Alcester, carrier. Samuel **Parks** of Hill Top, Staffs, victualler. William **Bayliss**. 1858
/141 John **Jennings** of Alcester, gunlock filler. Thomas **Jones**, weaver. Widow **Combs**. 1762
/146 Thomas **Round**, proctor of Alcester. John **Hunte**. 1650
/147 Richard **Dewes** of Alcester, husbandman. John **Hunt**. John **Matthews**. 1670
/148 John **Smith** of Alcester, yeoman. Margaret **Smith**. Margaret **Stenton**. Richard **Dewes**. Joseph **Wheeler**.
/149 Francis **James** of Alcester, yeoman. John **Newman**. William **Waldron**. 1688
/150 William **Compton**, tailor. Mary **Compton**. Ann **Compton**. John **Jelson**, butcher. Court **Dewes**. John **Stevens**. 1702

ALCESTER FOLK MENTIONED IN THE QUARTER SESSIONS 1690 – 1696

Easter 1690

William **Getley** of Alcester, labourer for riotously and unlawfully entering the dwelling of William **Grover**, and then and there by colour of a warrant from the high sheriff, breaking and spoiling his goods.

Michaelmas 1691

Margaret **Williams** of Alcester, widow, indicted for stealing and taking away 6 yards of linen cloth, value 10d. of the goods of Joyce **Haynes**. *To be whipped at Alcester*

Easter 1692

John **Getley**, the younger, labourer, indicted for stealing one hen, value 4d., the goods of Moses **Hunt**. *To be whipped at Warwick.*

*Minutes: - John **Getley**, younger, indicted for felony and petty larceny, and having confessed the same to be whipped at Warwick and then discharged paying fee. He owes 4s. John **Townsend**, John **Getley** and William **Getley**, all of Alcester, labourers, indicted for a riot and assault upon William **Burman**, the elder.*

Trinity 1692

John **Getley** and John **Townsend**, both of Alcester, for a riot and assault, 10s each.

Easter 1693

Nicholas **Asply**, tailor and Mary **Asply**, widow, both of Alcester. For stealing a parcel of linen cloth, value 10d, of the goods of Anne **Knight**. *To be flogged at Warwick.* Michaelmas 1693

The inhabitants of Alcester presented for not repairing a quicksand in Stone Lane.

Easter 1695

Thomas **Heywood**, the elder and William **Vaughan**, both of Alcester, for extortion.

Lent Assizes 1696

Fines made – Timothy **Howes** of Alcester, jersey weaver,(and others) 6s.8d for divers riots and taking away wool of the goods of Edward **Birch**.

Summer Assizes 1696

Fines made – George **Milward** alias **Miller**, of Alcester, bookseller, for divers riots and offences.