

Report for the February 2016 meeting of the Malvern Civic Society

On Friday 12 February we enjoyed an interesting talk given by Roy Albutt on the stained glass windows of A J Davies of the Bromsgrove Guild. Katie Wade then gave an update on the local project "Route to the Hills" where she aims to create educational resources for the future and to make this fun for everyone.

A retired head teacher and born in Bromsgrove, Roy has engaged in further degree subjects during his retirement, including research into stained glass and has written four books on the subject.

Archibald John Davies, known as A J Davies (1877-1953) made quite a big contribution to the country and the world. He was born in London but spent most of his life in the Birmingham area, where he taught at the Birmingham School of Art and then joined the Bromsgrove Guild of Fine Arts. In 1906 he established and ran his own stained glass studio at the Guild. The School of Art was influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement when stained glass work was introduced into the curriculum by Henry Payne in 1901. A J Davies's glass was influenced by Edward Burne-Jones and Henry Payne. A J Davies worked at the Guild for the rest of his life and produced 250 windows for the UK, and another 100 that were sent abroad. Wonderful works of art came out of the enormous corrugated iron buildings where he was located.

The Bromsgrove Guild was founded in 1898 by Walter Gilbert. Buckingham Palace gates and railings are perhaps the most prestigious commission that came out of the Guild.

Roy took us through some beautiful illustrations of the stained glass windows produced by A J Davies, picking out the common themes which were generally of an ecclesiastical nature. His windows were often in memory of children, for example Christ blessing children at Warborough, Oxfordshire in 1946. Memorial windows to people who died in wartime were also prevalent, such as a window shaped as a wheel, including very fine spokes, at Bradley Green, Bromsgrove in 1920. Flowers and harvests were a theme A J Davies followed and are also a feature of Arts & Crafts glass. We admired examples of his windows in Hereford and Worcester Cathedrals and learned that there is a window of his in the Wyche Free Church at Upper Colwall. There are also some on display at the Worcestershire Museum. Further from home, we saw examples from Toronto, Canada, where Davies produced windows for people who had sent their sons to fight in Europe. There are 40 windows by A J Davies in South Africa at Johannesburg Anglican Cathedral.

Roy described the process of making stained glass windows, explaining that the colour is in the glass whilst the detail is in brown pigment. Much glass is white with one or more colours on top. Once that is put into the kiln the detail becomes permanent. No two church windows are exactly the same size so can only be similar in drawing or design. Lead deteriorates every 100 to 150 years so windows have to be removed and re-leaded.