

Welford and Weston Local History Society

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Newsletter 58 – November 14th 2019

I'm absolutely delighted to be able to announce that Professor Chris Dyer, our speaker in September this year, has accepted my invitation to him to become the first President of our Society.



Professor Christopher Dyer CBE, is currently the Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Leicester. He was born and brought up here in Welford-on-Avon, in a house opposite the school. He attended the local primary school, and then King Edward VI Stratford upon Avon. He became involved in archaeological excavations at Alcester in 1956, and has continued ever since to combine archaeological with written evidence. He did history degrees at Birmingham University, and has taught at Birmingham, after a time at the University of Edinburgh (where one of his students was the future prime minister, Gordon Brown). In 2001 he moved to become head of the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester.

Professor Dyer has a special interest in developments in society in the medieval period. His publications include books on medieval history with particular reference to life and society.

His research interests include rural settlements and landscapes of the medieval period in England, including dispersed settlements, and he has speculated about the origins of villages and hamlets. His interest in later medieval settlements and their shrinkage and desertion connects with his historical work on the economic and social history of the medieval countryside. He is currently carrying out fieldwork and documentary research on a number of villages in the west midlands. Recent work in Worcestershire has focussed on the expansion of settlements in the 1330s. A Gloucestershire village, Pinbury in Duntisbourne Rous, has been revealed to have been a loosely nucleated settlement that began to decline at the end of the 13th century. Research into some south Warwickshire villages (such as Compton Scorpion, Weston juxta Cherington and Long Compton) involve comparing deserted and surviving settlements.

His many publications include Making a Living in the Middle Ages, the People of Britain 850-1520 {2002}; An Age of Transition? Economy & Society in England in the later Middle Ages {2005}; and A Country Merchant (1495-1520), {2012}. He has published many articles and contributions to books on social, economic and landscape history, and archaeology and has edited several learned journals.

He is Vice President of the Society for Medieval Archaeology; Vice President and Trustee of the Medieval Settlement Research Group; Trustee of the Herefordshire Victoria County History Trust; and Chairman of the Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust Executive Committee. He is also currently Chairman of the Dugdale Society and President of the Worcestershire Historical Society. He is a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. More locally he is also President of the Chipping Campden Historical Society.

I cannot think of anyone better or more suitable as President of our Local History Society, and I look forward to a long and strong association and fruitful relationship. I feel that we are indeed fortunate to be able to welcome back to this village one of our own.