



History of Alderminster and the Bell

The Bell sits at the heart of the picturesque village of Alderminster, close to the cultural town of Stratford-upon-Avon and the gateway to the Cotswolds. It is part of the historic Alscot Estate, a thriving award-winning estate located in the beautiful Warwickshire countryside.

The stunning nearby Cotswold towns of Stow-on-the-Wold, Broadway and Chipping Campden offer an abundance of attractions and breathtaking scenery. The jewel in Shakespeare's country, Stratford-upon-Avon is a charming town bursting with history and boasting numerous world famous landmarks such as the renowned Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Anne Hathaway's Cottage and Mary Arden's House.

Alderminster was an exclave of Worcestershire until 1931 when it was transferred to Warwickshire. It previously sat under the council of Shipston-on-Stour but when the parish was transferred to Warwickshire, it became part of the rural district of Stratford-on-Avon.

In the Domesday Book (1086) Alderminster is shown as part of the land of St Mary's of Pershore. In 1884 the village is shown on a map as consisting only of a few houses; although slightly out of date now with the new building developments, the 2011 census recorded the parish's population had grown to 491. The first mention of a post office in the village is in July 1849, when a type of postmark known as an undated circle was issued. Sadly the post office closed in 1973. The older buildings in the village still show evidence of their past though: the old forge, the old school house and the old bakery.



The post office here in the foreground in around 1920.

The view in the picture below is recognisable as the main road that our pub sits on, taken in around 1900.



There are two local churches, St Mary and the Holy Cross which sits closest to the pub. It is of 12th century origin and has been listed Grade II since 1967.

Here you can see the bells of the Holy Cross laying on the ground in front of the entrance after having been returned from Loughborough following repair in June 1939.



We suppose, but with no evidence, the name of the Bell could derive from some connection with these bells. However it was common before times of signage and literate customers that pubs were differentiated by symbols or objects that hung outside, hence the now common names of The Boot, The Copper Kettle, The Crooked Billet (a bent branch from a tree). We do not know the date that our pub came into existence, but perhaps it was so named because of a bell that hung outside.

The second church, St Mary's, is across the fields a little behind the pub, classed as being in Whitchurch. It's a little tricky to get to, surrounded by trees in the heart of a field, a short distance to the west of the village of Alderminster but separated from it by the narrow banks of the River Stour.

The village of Whitchurch itself no longer exists, save for a few farm buildings and this wonderful small church which is largely still a Norman building with chancel windows and a walled graveyard.



St Mary's church.

Alscot history

There has been a house at Alscot since the Middle Ages. At one time it belonged to Deerhurst Priory in Gloucestershire and then ownership passed to Tewkesbury Abbey. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, it passed into private hands. In 1747 Preston and Alscot, together with the adjacent manors of Whitchurch, Wimpstone and Crimscote, were sold to James West, MP.

James West (1703-1772), was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a noted collector of books, manuscripts and coins. He also became President of the Royal Society. In 1746 he was appointed Joint Secretary to the Exchequer, a post he held until 1762, when he retired to live at Alscot.

During the first phase of extension, the new north wing was built around the old house and designed with battlements and projecting bays with pointed gothic windows which remain. In 1762-6 the larger south wing of the house was built with Palladian proportions and a gothic exterior to match the north wing. The interior of the south wing in particular is richly decorated in gothic plasterwork relief and gull edged panelling and the north wing boasts limed oak panels and decorative shutters. Later, in 1838, gothic lodges were built at the head of the long drive, off the main Stratford Road.

Today, Emma is the ninth generation West to call Alscot Park home, which she shares with her husband, Andrew and their three children.



Alscot, then and now. With thanks to the Alscot Estate for the information.

The Bell

We actually know so little about the history of our pub, except that it has been at the heart of the village for as long as people can remember.



The Bell Inn, Alderminster, with people in doorway, bicycle leaning against wall and pony and trap with man and dog approaching. Houses in background. 1920s

It has obviously changed somewhat over the years, getting bigger with each incarnation from the two lower rooms that made up the original public house. As an inn we would imagine it took in travellers, stopping for respite on their way through Warwickshire. It now offers eight beautiful bedrooms to continue that tradition.

We'd love to find out more, so if you have any stories of old from the Bell we would love to hear them.

The Bell remains within the property portfolio of Alscot Estate with Brunning & Price Ltd being tenants.
