

The following text is transcribed from an article published in the Alcester Chronicle newspaper (March 12th, 1927) on the opening of the Unionist Club on March 9th, 1927

Please Note:

The spelling, punctuation and grammar are just as it was written all those years ago and no attempt has been made to modify or modernise. The only difference is that, whereas the newspaper had three columns, this document contains only one column and is, therefore, spread over four pages

NEW UNIONIST CLUB AT ALCESTER

OFFICIAL OPENING BY LORD HENRY SEYMOUR

For some years it has been felt that some commodious premises were required in Alcester to provide opportunities for social intercourse and for recreation, and so contribute to the social life of the town. In the autumn of last year the matter was taken in hand seriously by an ambitious committee, when the property in High Street known as London House, came into the market. This was purchased and taken over by a number of guarantors, who after much careful thought and work, together with the assistance of their architect (Mr Edwin H Earp), have evolved the excellent premises hitherto to be known as the Alcester Unionist Club Ltd. Although the name of the club suggests allegiance to the Unionist Party politically, we believe the intentions on the promoters is more social than political. However that maybe, it cannot be denied that Alcester now possesses a club which for neatness and comfort will bear favourable comparison with any other of its size in the Midlands, and those responsible for its provision are heartily to be congratulated on the result achieved.

The main premises are situate in High Street, with a large entrance hall approached from the street. On the left of this is a spacious billiard room, containing a full size billiard table, replete with all necessary and modern appurtenances, while to the right is a neatly fitted bar and cellar, with a kitchen at the further end. On the 1st floor is a large clubroom extending the whole length of the building. This will be utilised as a card and games room, and also for meetings, lectures, entertainments, etc. The reading room or committee room, is on the same floor, where lavatory and other accommodation is provided. The caretaker's apartments are on the floor above, and comprise living room, 2 bedrooms, larder and other domestic offices.

In the matter of furniture the committee have very wisely looked to utility and comfort rather than gaudiness. The furnishing arrangements were placed in the hands of the Alcester Cabinet Works Ltd., and carried out with gratifying results, while the repairs and alterations necessary have been executed in best style by the Alcester Builders Ltd., under the direction of Mr Earp.

The club has been fortunate in securing as its first president Colonel Lord Henry Seymour, D.S.O, J.P., of Park Hall, a gentleman who is ever ready and willing to do anything possible for the betterment and fuller enjoyment of life by his fellow men. While staunch to the principles of the Unionist cause, his lordship's ambition is to weld more strongly the link that binds the Hertford family to Alcester, and to maintain the traditions which have for generations existed between Ragley on the county of Warwick. The club has likewise the support of the member for the division (Capt. Anthony Eden, M.P.), and other leading Unionists of South Warwickshire, while the present officials are; - Chairman, Mr W.G. Ison; treasurer, Mr K. Hawtin; committee, Messrs A.C.

Baylis, C. Corbett, F. Dyson, J.W. Fisher, C. Hunt, E.G. Hunt, L. Ison, A. Quiney, and A.C. Stewart; secretary, Mr G.H. Hopkins.

The official opening of the Club took place on Wednesday evening, and was an interesting and enjoyable function. Upwards of 60 enthusiastic members were present in the large room, amongst the company being Lord Henry Seymour, J.P. (president), Major Noel Chance (vice president), Mr W.G. ISON (chairman), Mr K Horton (hon treasurer), Mr G.H. Hopkins (secretary), Mr W.J. Whitsed (Conservative Agent for the Warwick and Leamington Division), The High Bailiff of Alcester (Mr C.R. Keniston), the Low Bailiff (Mr W.J. Morris), Messrs H.D. Adcock, G. Haines, J.H. Bomford, J.W. Fisher, C. Corbett, R.L.C. Forrest, L. ISON, C. Harding, H. Buggins, A.C. Stewart, F. Dyson, E. H. Earp, G. Clark, R.C. Bagge, D.W. Davis, A.C. Baylis, A.H. Crouch, W. Rees, I. Stanley, A. Quiney, A. Hutton, H. Davis, and others.

Mr W.G. Ison, in opening the proceedings, said that he was very pleased indeed to occupy the position of the first chairman of the Alcester Unionist Club, and he could assure them that the committee had spent a great deal of time, thought and labour in the formation and getting together of that club. Perhaps at this point it would be well for him to tell them something in regard to the origination of the club, in connection with which one gentleman was deserving of special praise and thanks, this being their old friend Mr K. Hawtin, who was responsible for starting the wheels moving – (applause). It was in the autumn of last year that Mister Hawtin informed him that the premises they now occupied were for sale, and would be in his opinion make a good club. He (the speaker) agreed with him, and they very soon placed the matter in front of certain other gentlemen who expressed their willingness to become guarantors, and the property was purchased. They next approached Lord Henry Seymour in regard to the presidency, and he was pleased to say his lordship readily assented to the proposal – (applause). Following this they commenced to put the club into shape, and in this connection the committee desired to acknowledge the invaluable services that were rendered by Mr Whitsed, whose assistance helped them to start the club on the right lines. They desired also to express their feelings of gratitude and admiration to Mr H. Hopkins the secretary of the club, for the Committee believed that in him they possessed an officer that was second to none. He had carried out his duties in a perfect manner, with credit to himself and satisfaction to every member of the committee. The Club was now an established fact, and it was pleasing to add that on this, the official opening night, they had 77 fully paid-up members and two honorary members. The share capital amounted to £727 and the loan capital to £275, making a total of £1002 – (applause). It was now his pleasing duty and privilege to ask Lord Henry Seymour to formally declare that the club open, but before doing so he asked his lordship's acceptance of an orchid, the favourite flower of the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, adding that the bloom had been grown in Alcester.

Lord Henry Seymour, on rising, was heartily received, observed that before declaring the club open he would like to express his thanks to all those who had been responsible for its provision, for had it not been for the public spirit of the committee that splendid cub would not have been in existence



that day. He confessed that at the commencement he felt somewhat nervous whether or not the club might run counter to their Conservative Association, but the fact that Mr. W. Whitsed was present that evening, and had given the club his blessing, allayed all such fears. He (Lord Henry) believed the club would be a great success, as it had been started under the best auspices, and would have the support of everybody in the town of Alcester. He was sorry the member for the division (Captain Eden) was not present that evening. He had received a letter from the Captain, stating that it was almost impossible for him to get away when the House was sitting. Wednesday, too, was the day for foreign questions, and it was necessary that he should be present. However, although he regretted being absent, Captain Eden wished the club every success, and sincerely hoped that it would be useful in promoting the social as well as the political life of Alcester – (applause). His Lordship then declared the club open, wishing it long life and prosperity, and concluded by heartily congratulating the chairman (Mr W.G. Ison), and everyone else who had been instrumental in providing it – (applause).

Major Chance said that he did not intend to make a speech. He desired most heartily to re-echo the wishes expressed by Lord Henry Seymour that the club would be successful and be the centre of social and political life in Alcester – ([applause).

The High Bailiff of Alcester (Mr C.E. Keniston) expressed his great pleasure at being present at that gathering, and he hoped the club would be successful and carry on the work of the Unionist Party in the town and neighbourhood. He had been told that the club would do him no good, but he thought otherwise. In his opinion a club was wanted in Alcester, and he hoped it would go on, be successful, and further the Unionist cause as much as possible – (applause).

In response to an invitation to say a few words, Mr W.J. Morris (Low Bailiff) returned thanks for the invitation extended to him to be present that evening, and he would like to add a word of congratulation to those who had organised and established the club. Whatever they aimed at, whether in a political, social or any other way, it was well to have a rallying point. He therefore wished the club all success, and expressed the hope that the principles for which it stood would be achieved, namely, the upholding of the constitution of the Empire – (applause).

Mr W.J. Whitsed (Conservative Agent) welcomed the club most heartily. He had been in politics for many years, and he knew the immense value of a club if run on the right lines. He welcomed the club also as a branch of the Conservative Association. There was no rivalry between them, and he believed they were going to work hard at hand in hand for the good of the cause and the principles they held dear – (applause). He was sorry there were not more clubs in the division. They wanted a rallying place in Alcester, where they could go, not only in the time of an election, but a place where committee meetings could be held and other business transacted. This club would provide all that was required in this respect, and he hoped the members of it would recognise that they had their share to do in the work of the Conservative and Unionist cause in the division. They must continue to work wholeheartedly for the principles they had to maintain. Having been the secretary of a Conservative club for some years, he knew the difficulties of running a club successfully. There was no difficulty and obtaining members, but they must see that before getting members they must have men of the right stuff, and see that they were all real Conservatives. If that were done he believed there was a great future for it, but he would respectfully urge upon them the immense necessity of being loyal to the Party whose principles they had signed to maintain. They had got to believe that those men who had been in power for the last two years had been doing their very best for the country as a whole, and he pleaded with those present to maintain unity and loyalty to their Party. There was only one alternative Party in the State. The Liberal Party had gone, leaving only the Socialist Party. If, therefore, they did not maintain the Conservative Party in power they could have nothing else but a Socialist Government. They must work hard for the next two years in considering their principles, which were the same today as laid down by Disraeli many years ago, namely, support of the Constitution, the unity of the Empire, and the improving of the conditions of the people –

(applause). He congratulated them all on the formation of that club, and he believed its future would be a happy one in maintaining the principles for which the club was started – (applause).

Mr George Haines proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Lord Henry Seymour for kindly coming there that evening to formally open that club. They all knew that his lordship was ever ready to do anything he possibly could in promoting the welfare of their old town – (applause). He desired also to convey the thanks of the members to Major Chance and the High and Low Bailiffs for the presence that night – (hear, hear).

Mr H.D. Adcock had pleasure in seconding the proper position which was heartily accorded.

In reply, Lord Henry Seymour said he was more than proud to be the first president of the Alcester Unionist Club. Many of those present would remember his late father, and he felt sure that had he been alive he would have welcomed the club. For that reason, if for no other, he was proud to be their first president.

Major Chance also acknowledged the vote of thanks.

The health of Lord Henry Seymour was afterwards drunk with enthusiasm and cordiality, after which this part of the proceedings terminated.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to a very excellent musical programme, the provision of which Messrs J. Fisher and J. Widdowson were responsible. A Birmingham concert party had been engaged, and their delightful programme of vocal and instrumental music, monologues, humorist and ventriloquial entertainments was much enjoyed. The artistes who gave of their best were; Pianoforte solos, Miss Kathleen Varnon; light comedian, Mr Leonard Grice; baritone, Mr Russell Bloomer; monologue, Mr Phil Parker; humorist and ventriloquist entertainer, Mr Clarence Edwards; vocal entertainer; Miss May Edwards. In addition to this programme, community singing was introduced, several popular choruses adding greatly to the enjoyment of the evening. With the singing of the National Anthem the formal opening of Alcester Unionist Club was brought to a close, no more successful gathering having been held in Alcester for many years.

