

## Welford and Weston Local History Society

[www.welfordandweston.org](http://www.welfordandweston.org)

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The fourth and final meeting of the 50<sup>th</sup> season of our Society will be given on **Friday March 27<sup>th</sup> in the Memorial Hall at 7.30.** The Talk is entitled :

**“From the Pillory to the Prison Cell: a Short History of Criminal Sentencing” and is given by Ginny Davis**

Benjamin Franklin is widely credited with originating the phrase ‘nothing can be certain in this life except death and taxes’ back in 1789. To this short list I would respectfully add Crime and Punishment. In February 2018 I attended a talk at the Wellesbourne Local History Group entitled ‘FROM THE PILLORY TO THE PRISON CELL’ given by Ginny Davis. Despite it being a raw winter day outside, the meeting venue was warm, welcoming and well-attended. The talk was highly entertaining and informative and many of the historical issues raised by the talk and associated questions were relevant to the UK today in respect of our current handling of crime and punishment. How should we respond to the fact, for example, that England and Wales currently imprison one of the highest proportions of their population in Western Europe and almost twice as many as Germany?

After her talk I asked Ginny if she would be prepared talk to The Welford and Weston Local History Society and she has kindly agreed to present it this year on March 27.

Criminal trials in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century were short and swift. Defendants were not allowed to give evidence and were not entitled to legal representation. Petty criminals were named and shamed with public, physical chastisement in the stocks and pillory, and with whipping. Felons were frequently hanged and by the 18th Century two hundred crimes, ranging from theft to murder, were punishable by death. The English legal system was nicknamed “The Bloody Code” and there followed a period during which the courts employed imaginative fictions and devices to avoid the death penalty being carried out. Gradually the penal system introduced other forms of sentence: transportation, hard labour, penal servitude and eventually, imprisonment. A take home message from her talk for those who look back lovingly to the good old days is be careful what you wish for!

“From The Pillory To The Prison Cell” chronicles this fascinating period of change in judicial and government treatment of criminals with reference to individual cases and examples of modern expressions which derive from the use of the death penalty. The talk is light-hearted, informative and entertaining but not for the faint-hearted. “Put your fingers in your ears” warnings are given when necessary.

Ginny Davis has an interesting and wide-ranging background. She gained a first class honours degree in Law from the University of Cambridge and practised as a criminal barrister. She is married to a High Court Judge. She also writes and performs plays for theatre and has sold out two successive runs at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She is a regular speaker to U3A, Probus and WI groups throughout the Midlands.

Ginny will present her talk on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall in Welford on Avon. She is a highly engaging personality and I sincerely hope that you will be able to attend.

*This is the last of the general meetings in this our 50th anniversary year. Once again we will be serving a glass of wine at the end of the meeting.*

Mike Kearsley