

**NOTES OF THE 8th MEETING OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY, held on 23 November
2011 at Stoneleigh Village Club**

Present: Sheila Woolf, Pam Baker, Liz Sykes, Lisa Reay, Anthony Bianco, Jean and David Vaughan, Jayne Brooks, Rachel and Philip Gill, Shirley Ball, Barbara Gee, Gill and Rod Wheat, June Burr, Jane Taylor, Sarah Ballinger, Paul Smith, Paula and Mrs Cornwell and Margaret Wallis

Apologies: Jenny Skidmore, Betty Craddock, David Brooks, Marian Murray, Patrick Sawdon, John Beeby

Thanks: to Rod for the provision of a projector for the evening.

Matters arising from the previous meeting:

- i) Sheila congratulated Shirley on her excellent talk. This had raised over £900 for the Church roof appeal.
- ii) Pam reported on a meeting with the Stretton group about their census 'interrogation'. This had involved 'mapping' of the census information, including the immigration of young men, the impact of the Corn Laws on the UK farming industry, movement of people in and out of the area every ten years. Pam hoped to produce a similar 'map' for Stoneleigh, but this would take some time.

Finance:

Lisa reminded everyone that subscriptions were due by the 1 January 2012*. She and Margaret would accept renewals or new members at the end of the meeting and new membership cards would be available. From the next meeting, £1 per member and £2 per visitor would be collected. This would help to cover additional costs incurred by the Society.

Committee Meeting Report:

Margaret reported on the meeting held on 17 November. The list of work initiated / completed / in progress was very impressive. This would be made available at the first Annual General Meeting which would be held on 27th March 2012 at Stoneleigh Abbey and a report of that meeting would be included in the Stoneleigh & Ashow News.

The format and venue of meetings was discussed. It was agreed that as meetings were now so much larger that the Club was no longer feasible as a venue. 2012 meetings would be held at the Village Hall on the last Tuesday of each month (except for the AGM, August and January) i.e. 28 February, 24 April, 29 May, 26 June, 31 July, 25 September, 30 October and 27 November. A separate event would be organised in December. A quarterly programme would be advertised, alternate meetings having a speaker. David Clark would speak about Ashow history on 28 February.

A small group (Philip, Sheila and Pam) were investigating the most appropriate way of storing the increasing amount of material being gathered by members.

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The Society had been asked to provide a reader for the Stoneleigh carol service to be held on 18 December; Lisa had offered to do this.

Presentation on Cordelia Leigh - 'A Life of Love in Action':

Sheila shared her findings to date about the life of Cordelia Leigh whose war-time activities had been brought to her attention because of Celia King's uncle's (Charles) bible which had been given to him, and indeed all soldiers in the village, by Cordelia Leigh. Stratford Record Office contains her war diary and Stoneleigh Abbey two albums into which she had pasted letters from soldiers. It is likely that together these make a unique compendium. Many of the Leigh family were enthusiastic writers, especially Cordelia, some of whose books were used in schools. Nature and Christianity were the main themes of her writings. In 1889 she founded the Stoneleigh and Ashow Naturalists' Club (the subscription of a penny a week was used to provide country holidays for city children). Sheila had found many records of these holidays. When the Great War was declared, Cordelia played a very active role e.g. produced 4000 copies of a recruiting leaflet and took a keen interest in recruits from the village. She corresponded regularly with the men, both in training and when they were deployed, and she was generous in responding to requests for cigarettes, socks etc. As of yet, Sheila had found no record of what she did during the Second World War, but in 1954 she wrote a book of reminiscences.

Cordelia died on 27 February 1956 and is buried in Ashow, next to her brother, Rowland.

Sheila hopes that her book will be published next summer.

Sheila was thanked for a fascinating presentation.

Christmas Meeting:

It was agreed that there should be a social meeting in December. Subsequently it was agreed that this would be in the Club at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 21 December.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday 28 February in Stoneleigh Village Hall.

***For those who wish to renew their membership, or know people who would like to join, please note that Lisa's contact details are:**

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