

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST AGM OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY,
HELD ON 27 MARCH 2012 AT STONELEIGH VILLAGE HALL**

Welcome: Sheila Woolf, Chairman, welcomed members and guests to the first AGM.

Apologies: Sarah Ballinger, John Beeby, June Burr, Roger Gilbert, Peter James, David and Eithne Sarginson and Jane Taylor.

Committee elections: In accordance with the Constitution two officers, Anthony Bianco and David Vaughan, had stood down but they were happy to stand for re-election for another year. They were duly re-elected.

Thanks: Rachel Gill had kindly offered to organise refreshments each month. The entrance fee of £1 for members and £2 for guests would cover the cost of this rather than having a raffle.

Chairman's Report: Sheila referred the audience to the handouts which included her detailed report. She thanked the Committee - Pam Baker, Lisa Reay, Shirley Ball, Anthony Bianco, Philip Gill and Margaret Wallis - and particularly David Vaughan who had suggested that the Society be set up. All had been very supportive and imaginative. This was only the tenth meeting of the Society and, as the report indicated, a great deal had been achieved in a very short time. Meetings so far had been a mixture of discussion and presentations about findings. Tonight was the first time there had been an 'outside' speaker. Initially meetings had been held in the Club but increased membership meant this had been outgrown as a venue and this was the first time the Hall had been used. Thanks were recorded to the Club for hospitality during our first year.

There had been several visits to record offices and other history societies as there was much to learn. Many members had familiarised themselves with local record sources as well as those online. Some of the work had already been shared, notably at the Village Duck Race in August 2011 when there was a display in the church about the history of the forge and the blacksmiths who had worked there; this had been repeated in October for the Royal Leamington Spa branch of the National Federation of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies. More was planned for the forthcoming Jubilee (see AOB below).

Considerable research had been undertaken (outlined in the handout) and much had already been discovered about the major buildings of the village and the environment in which it is set.

Membership currently stood at 30. We were delighted that Nat Alcock had agreed to be an Honorary Member and he was welcomed to the meeting.

When considering the future of the Society, various issues needed addressing e.g. how to publish what we know, and where. Several approaches had been made as a result of the Society's presence on the village website. A permanent home was needed for the physical resources that had been gathered/produced; ideas welcomed.

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During the past 10 months many ideas had been planted and the Society felt confident that these would bear fruit in the coming months.

Treasurer's Report: Lisa referred to the printed report which included the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2011 at which point the bank balance was £284.11. The report was accepted.

AOB: Various events were announced.

April 17 - Warwickshire Local History Society - Talk on 'Middlemarch'

April 19 - SHS visit to the RASE Library. 12 places on a first come. First served basis. Sign in Lisa's 'Black book' or contact her after the meeting. **NB This replaces the SHS meeting scheduled for April 24th. Please contact Sheila/Lisa a.s.a.p. if you wish to go.**

19 May - Leamington History Fair to which local societies were invited to bring materials.

26 May-10 June - Leamington History Festival. This coincided with the Jubilee display in Stoneleigh Church which would include displays of Shirley Ball's village photographs, Roger Gilbert's exhibit on Stoneleigh houses, Coronation memories etc. Details of the varied events in Leamington are available on www.leamingtonlooksback.co.uk

Sheila then welcomed Patrick McIlroy who spoke about the restoration of the Repton landscape at Stoneleigh Abbey.

Work on the Abbey grounds had started 7 years ago following a £950,000 grant from Natural England (?????) and the EU. The configuration of the Abbey grounds had changed several times since C16 and several ponds and leits had disappeared. Patrick outlined the extensive civil engineering and other work that had been required to restore the old Cast Iron Bridge, the West Park Weir, The Lake, The Gazebo and Abbey Mill Bridge. The work had cost 50% more than anticipated due to problems discovered once restoration had begun. Most of the building work was now underwater. There were already signs that wildlife was returning - otters, kingfishers, bats (four varieties), shag, cormorant, swans etc. - but their whereabouts would not be divulged.

A condition of the grants had been that the grounds would be open to the general public. The Stoneleigh project would be officially opened in summer 2012 and an SHS visit was scheduled to take place on 26 June (more details later – Patrick felt that it might be September before access would be possible).