

## NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2012 IN STONELEIGH VILLAGE HALL

Attended by 29 members and guests - Mike Baker, Will and Nora Blagburn, Dick and Daphne James, and David James.

Apologies: June Burr, Liz Sykes, Anthony Bianco, Sarah Ballinger, David Brooks, Ann Harris and Marianne Puxley.

Sheila welcomed everyone and introduced **Pam Baker** who spoke about 'The Rector of Ashow's Funeral Bill of 1732'.

The Farmer family were residents of Manor Farm between 1715 and 1886. Amongst the family papers held at Warwick Record Office was a bill for £20.5.7d for the funeral of Richard Farmer, the Rector of Ashow (father of Richard Farmer who lived at Manor Farm), aged 79 and having moved to Ashow 56 years previously.

The 'title of the bill refers to 'Mr Farmer's Funeral Goods, 7 October 1732' and includes 'The Coffin Dressings' - an English woollen shroud (a contemporary requirement), a fine sheet and a coffin pall - (to cover the whole coffin). There were then listings of items such as silk hat bands (for some of the mourners), black gloves, some items 'of lower quality', plus yards of ribbons (to decorate men's hats) and some white gloves. Crepe of varying quality, buttons, lower quality gloves, and other items were provided for about 30 women and, intriguingly, one pair of stockings.

It was customary for 'mourning favours' to be given to mourners by the family - hence the ribbons and gloves. In Victorian times these favours included brooches and other jewellery.

The parish registers of Ashow start in 1733, the previous records having been used as spills! Ashow is known to have been very popular for weddings in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century so perhaps Rector Richard was responsible for a latter day Gretna Green type of operation.

Despite the lost register, there is a record of those who attended the 1732 funeral.

Drysdale's 1732 'Antiquities of Warwickshire' refers to a flat stone commemorating Mrs June Farmer, wife of Rector Richard, but the wrong dates are quoted for her. (This worne stone is under the current carpet at Ashow Church).

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**Sheila Skinner** then spoke about her great grandparents' and uncle's association with Stoneleigh. Her great grandfather built the original bridge across the river, by Motsow Hill Cottages, and was very distressed when the wooden bridge was later replaced by a concrete and steel one. Her grandfather, Frank Walton, was born in 1877 and lived in Pear Tree Cottage and Sheila remembers visiting him there during World War 11 (Stoneleigh being deemed far safer than Coventry at that time). In his diary, Harry Edmunds wrote that her

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father was a 'funeral furnisher' although neither Sheila nor her cousins can remember ever seeing more than one coffin made there.

The two Walton brothers (Frank ,and Tom who lived at Motslow Cottage) were responsible for decorating and general repair work on the Estate. Frank made high quality furniture as well as undertaking more routine jobs. He kept detailed records of the work he undertook for the estate, individual householders, the Rural District Council, Church etc. They were meticulous workers and had a virtual monopoly of work in the village. Meanwhile, Sheila's grandmother, Selina Loveland, taught at Stoneleigh School.

Sheila brought the ledgers and several photographs to illustrate her talk.

### **Forthcoming Events**

The SHS meeting on 30 October would be a 'bring and show' event. Members and guests were encouraged to bring any photographs and memorabilia to share. It was hoped that eventually there could be a permanent display of some material in the Leigh chapel.

David Brooks had agreed to talk about 'Land Use' at the meeting on 27 November.

There would be a Christmas social in the club on 18 December, more details later.

'Who Do You Think We Were?' by Sheila would form the basis of a social evening in the Hall in aid of the Church Nave Roof appeal would be held on 6 October. Tickets from Sheila or Shirley Ball.

Sheila's new book about Cordelia Leigh would be launched in the Church on the evening of 2 November (at 7pm for 7.30pm). Everyone welcome but please inform Sheila, for catering purposes.

A list of events organised by Warwick District History Society and the Warwick Records office was available. Members were asked to sign in the 'black book' if they were interested in attending any events. Anyone else wishing to go to Compton Verney on December 1<sup>st</sup> should let Sheila know at the next meeting as bookings should be made by 17<sup>th</sup> November.

Nat Alcock's book on The Medieval Peasant Home in Midland England would be published shortly. Fliers would be available at the next meeting.

N.B. It was decided that potential members could continue to attend as guests but it was hoped that many of them would decide to join in 2013. It was emphasised that it was not compulsory for members to undertake research.