

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON TUESDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2013

Apologies: David and Jean Vaughan, Sarah Ballinger, Nat Alcock, Avril Newey, Peter Thompson and Shirley Ball

Introduction:

Sheila welcomed everyone and then thanked all those who had helped with events during the summer, especially Pam Baker for preparing the village timeline for the Leigh Chapel display, to Roger Gilbert for mounting the exhibition of photographs of village houses, Liz Sykes for having donated display boards and to Lisa Reay for donating a book and pamphlet stand. All these had greatly enhanced the SHS display which had attracted a steady stream of visitors during events associated with the Leamington Society weekend, the Duck Race, Warwickshire Heritage weekend and the village Craft Market. The display was now seen as an added attraction for visitors to the church; signage had been put in place and there were notices on the Church noticeboards in the porch and at the gate.

The SHS Committee had met in July to discuss the Society's future programme. Dates had been circulated to members immediately and had subsequently appeared in the Stoneleigh & Ashow News. Future projects had also been discussed, including:

- Work on an SHS website stoneleighhistorysociety.org.uk
- Plans were in hand to commemorate the birth (on 27 May 1815) in Canley of Sir Henry Parkes (considered the father of the Australian Federation) who had been christened in Stoneleigh. The PCC had given initial approval but the final design of a plaque, (designed by Rory) would have to be approved at diocese level.
- The SHS would participate in the commemoration of the beginning of the Great War. On 27 July there would be an event highlighting the contribution made to the war effort by the Leigh family. An attempt would be made to obtain more information about the men listed on the board on the wall in the village hall and what became of them when they returned home afterwards. Lisa would head a group investigating this and anyone interested was asked to contact her.
- Shirley Ball was hoping that other people could help her to identify some of the people featured in the many photographs that had been donated. An attempt would be made to get older villagers to a gathering to discuss these.
- The church gravestones list needed updating since the WI attempted the task some years ago. N.B. the dates on stones do not always match the dates in the written records! Also note that the NADFAS church record included the fabric of the building not its surroundings.
- The work of the Stoneleigh stitchers and the story behind the design and production would be co-ordinated by Margaret Wallis.
- Proposals for other projects were welcomed.

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The programme for events organised by the Warwick History Society had been received and these were available for members to consult.

These announcements were followed by a **Talk by Pete James about Houses in Stareton, followed by a short introduction to Palaeography.**

This talk was a repeat of the one given earlier in the year when the (then) projector did not work properly. Pete has traced his family in Stareton back to 1555 and has prepared interesting family trees showing how a relatively few families were linked by marriage and by trade. There were 15 properties in the village recorded on the Goodwine Map of Stareton 1597, the year before the village was enclosed, with the agreement of the then Lord Leigh. By 1586, 13 of the 28 fullers in the Coventry Guild of Fullers were from Stoneleigh. Existing cottages such as Yew Tree, Rose and Park Farm date from this period. Sporadic lists of Stareton residents had been identified over the centuries, with certain names appearing regularly.

Silk-weaving followed fulling as a big local occupation and at one time there were 20,000 weavers in Coventry - half the population but all that changed early in the 1800s when the Cobden Treaty allowed silk to come from elsewhere and many people left Coventry, often for work in silk manufacturing overseas.

Most of the Stareton records can be identified via the National Archive website which then refers to the Stafford Records Office. It was working on these records that Pete had to learn about the interpretation of old handwriting i.e. palaeography. The National Archive site has very helpful online tutorials e.g. 'Help Reading Old Documents' and 'Study of Old Handwriting'. These tutorials are of varying degrees of difficulty but the letters themselves are often difficult to interpret, with different styles e.g. 'Secretary Hand' being used, or sometimes a mixture, and of course even if letters can be identified spellings are variable.

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The next meeting will be at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 29 October when Pam Baker will talk about her discoveries about the 1663 disbursements.