

NOTES OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2015 IN STONELEIGH VILLAGE HALL

Present: Twenty-six members and two guests (Jill and John Armstrong from Pypes Mill).

Apologies: Shirley Ball, David Brookers, Sue Crofts, David Eaves and Avril Newey.

Introduction: Sheila welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were only a few announcements.

Avril Newey had organised an event at Coventry Methodist Church at 2.30 on 7 November. This comprised poetry readings about men who returned from WW1, memories from families, and a performance by the Spires Choir.

David Brooks had almost completed his agricultural history of Stoneleigh.

Lisa Reay invited anyone interested in discussing the Churchyard Project to see her over coffee or to get in touch by phone or email. She was pleased that several did so after the presentation in September– and would welcome others!

At the next meeting, on 24 November, Sheila and David Vaughan would talk about the Leigh Peerage Case which scandalised the whole country in the 1840s.

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Pete James then gave a fascinating presentation on **Fulling Mills in the Stoneleigh Area.**

Fulling is the process whereby a clay, fuller's earth, is kneaded into woollen cloth to absorb lanolin, oils and other greasy impurities, and also to whiten the cloth. Urine was a key factor. Pete described the process, dating from C10, with etchings and other illustrations. After treatment, the cloth was put on a tenter frame in the open air, held by tenter hooks (n.b. Tainters Hill, Mill End in Kenilworth). The Domesday Book mentions two fulling mills in Stoneleigh, two in Ashow and one in Bericote. Initially hands and feet were used but by C12 some automation was also involved. Thanks to the flourishing wool trade in Coventry and the abbeys at Stoneleigh and Coombe fulling was important for several centuries and there were mills at Home Grange, Stareton, Cryfield, Ashow, Stareton, Pypes Mill and Water Mill.

The Fullers Guild was founded in Coventry in 1438. Some meetings were held at St Mary's Guildhall, but mainly in one of the many pubs in Coventry. Various mystery plays (i.e. plays performed by local tradesmen, "mystere" being the word for trade) developed, some including music e.g. in Shearman and Taylors Pageant (The Coventry Carol). By 1586 there were 13 Stoneleigh fullers in the Coventry Guild. Fulling at Radford Brook, Nauls Mill and Pypes Mill are recorded as late as 1878. Some fulling mills became corn mills later on.

The talk was followed by a lively question and answer session. One question referred to the origin of Fuller's Earth and later uses. After the meeting Pete found a Wikipedia entry on the subject. (For those interested, simply Google 'Wikipedia, Fuller's Earth' and away you go).

A vote of thanks was given to Pete for all the hard work that had gone into such an interesting presentation.