

NOTES OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2015 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: 22 members and 4 guests

Apologies: Sarah Ballinger, David Brooks, Liz Sykes, Anne Gregory

Welcome: Sheila Woolf welcomed everyone to the meeting. She announced that the SHS social would be held in the Village Club on Tuesday 15 December from 7.30 pm. This would be an informal event although membership renewals would be taken then, and again at the February meeting. Those attending the social were asked to bring a small contribution towards refreshments. On Saturday 16 January 2016 there would be a Quiz in the Village Club, sponsored by the SHS as one of a series of sponsored events by various Village groups. More details would be circulated nearer the time. Lisa handed out a brief resume of the 2016 programme; this can also be found on the website www.stoneleighhistorysociety.org.uk

The Stoneleigh Scandal: or “Bring Up the Bodies”

David Vaughan and Sheila then jointly presented a long talk which summarised the complex history of the different – and very fractious - relationships between the various parts of the Leigh family, not all of whom had direct blood links to the main family. The wrangle continued between 1767 and 1850. Umpteen petitions, challenges to wills by legal experts, (involving a series of contradictory witnesses), ensured the battle continued over many years. A considerable amount of melodrama was also involved, including an assault on Stoneleigh Abbey, a missing stonework monument, and the publication of a book by a solicitor, Charles Griffin, who alleged that the monument had been thrown under the Rennie Bridge in Stoneleigh Park, with the bodies of some builders. Chandos Leigh spent the best part of his life fighting this case (which made us appreciate why perhaps he had other priorities than answering begging letters from Sir Henry Parkes in Australia!).

The talk was illustrated by a series of contemporary illustrations; newspaper extracts and legal proceedings. Sheila and David were thanked for the tremendous amount of work they had put into condensing such a long and complex story.