

**Minutes of the Stoneleigh History Society meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2025  
at 7.30 pm. Venue – Stoneleigh Village Hall**

1. Sheila Woolf welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were 22 members present, 2 visitors and 7 apologies.
2. Notices: a. Sheila reminded everyone about the “Lights of Leamington’ event due to take place in February. b. Members were recommended to look at the WLHS website for details of their planned events. c. As it is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the 2WW in Europe this year, Sheila has some ideas for a Stoneleigh event, probably on Saturday May the 10<sup>th</sup>, in the evening. Anyone interested in taking part or helping with the organisation should get in touch. d. Sheila thanked Sarah Ballinger and the volunteer team who will be providing refreshments this year. e. Finally she reminded everyone that February’s meeting will be the first meeting when members ‘take the stage’ with their own short presentations.
3. Sheila welcomed David Morse and invited him to give his presentation ‘ **1816 – the year without a summer**’.

**Mt. Tambora** in Indonesia had been a 14,000 feet high volcano. It started to erupt in 1812 but became more active during 1815 and early 1816. But between April and July 1816 it’s eruptions were more violent and 24 cubic miles of pyroclastic substance was ejected, causing the volcano to shrink in size by 5,000 feet.

The effects on the Pacific area were catastrophic. Forty thousand people in Indonesia lost their lives. There were tsunamis, food production was halted, there were floods in China and general devastation.

In Europe the weather became wetter and colder throughout June, July and August. The light levels were affected as a dry fog descended, and in the evenings there were brightly coloured sunsets.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 there was a huge migration of troops and camp followers making their way home across Europe. In 1816 there was a typhus and cholera epidemic. The wet and cold weather only made things worse.

In North America, it snowed in New York on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June and on the 10<sup>th</sup> in Quebec. 1816 became the 2<sup>nd</sup> coldest year in the Northern Hemisphere since 1400.

In the UK the wet and cold weather coincided with a lengthy period of agricultural depression. Despite the efforts of the British government to import supplies of grain these were insufficient and large numbers of people in the countryside were in distress even before the effects of the eruption were felt. Civil disturbances became common place e.g. Ely and Littleport in May 1816.\*

With regard to the effect on cultural life it’s highly likely that artists like Turner

would have witnessed the strange skies over Europe in 1816. His paintings of eerily coloured clouds and sweeping sunsets may have been influenced by what he saw.

Mary Shelley and her party travelled to Geneva at this time and were badly affected by the heavy snow and cold. The long periods indoors probably gave her time to write Frankenstein.

Could what happened in Indonesia in 1816 happen again? There are many areas of the world where this is a possibility – Iceland, Naples, Yellowstone National Park and under the sea. Who knows!

4. Sheila thanked David for an interesting and unusual presentation. She invited questions from the audience.
5. Refreshments followed and the meeting closed at 21.00.
6. Next meeting 25<sup>th</sup> of February.

N.B \* for those wishing to read more consult the following : University of Nottingham Blog Post April the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, by Lucy ‘ Marking 200 years since the ‘super’ eruption of Tambora 5-11<sup>th</sup> April 1816’.