

**Stoneleigh History Society meeting. Stoneleigh Village Hall.
25th of February 2025 at 7.30 pm.**

1. There were 22 members present with one visitor and eight apologies.
2. Sheila Woolf welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a number of announcements: a. A reminder about the WLHS trip in late spring to Winterbourne House In Edgbaston. As members the fee is reduced – a chance to visit a lovely house and garden. b. Sheila, Lisa and Jill had visited Leamington to see the 'Lights of Leamington' display and had had a nostalgic experience. c. Preparations for the VE event in May are underway. Adrian volunteered to help with the sound equipment. d. Joe Ball has been in hospital after suffering what is believed to be a stroke. Good wishes from the Society for a good recovery were expressed.
3. Sheila invited Shirley Ball to give her presentation entitled '**My husband on Christmas Island.**'

Shirley's first husband was David Thorley. He was born in Stoneleigh on the 3rd of January 1937. Shirley Edmunds, also a Stoneleigh resident, and David were married at Stoneleigh Church in 1962.

David joined the RAF when he was 18 and in 1957 he was posted to Christmas Island in the Pacific Ocean. (His posting was part of Operation Grapple which saw a series of nuclear weapon tests carried out close to the island between 1957 and 1958).

Shirley showed a number of artefacts such as photographs of David and his colleagues and postcards which he had sent home to her. She explained that they had a lot of free time after maintaining the Vulcan bombers which would later release the bombs. As tourists they visited a number of other islands close by.

When the bombs were eventually detonated the airmen watched from the beaches. There were not given any protection and were instructed to turn their backs and cover their eyes. When they later turned to look, they saw a huge mushroom shaped cloud rising up in the sky.

Shirley and David were not aware of the damage that had been done to David's physical health but in 1990 aged 53 he died.

Shirley explained that at the time little explanation was given about the ill health experienced by the veterans and their families.

We now know about the risks of cancer, heart problems and deformities associated with exposure to radiation.

To recognise the contribution that soldiers, airmen and sailors had made a special medal was created called the 'Nuclear Test Medal'. Shirley received David's medal, and another Stoneleigh resident Robin Bussell also received one due to his service in the Royal Navy during the same period.

Sheila then invited Pete James to give his presentation the notes of which I attach to these minutes. '**The Earls of Mercia**'. Pete told us a fascinating tale which ended with Lady Godiva's granddaughter Edith becoming Queen of England in 1066.

Next Sheila invited Maggie Moorhouse to give her presentation on '**The Garlick family**'.

Maggie explained that her research into the family was occasioned by her research into the graves in the London Road Cemetery in Coventry.

The Garlick family started a building company in 1862. They started in a small way but eventually became one of the largest building companies in the area.

They were eventually taken over by Deeley's in 1977.

The firm built many large public buildings in Coventry – Coventry Technical College, the Standard Triumph factory on Tile Hill Lane, one of the earliest buildings of Warwick University at Gibbet Hill and St. Margaret's Church at Ball Hill on the Walsgrave Road.

Maggie was able to show us the early drawings for the Technical College and the 'ghost factory' that was the Standard Triumph Factory from the air during World War 2. She also showed photos of the laying of the foundations for St. Margaret's Church which featured members of the Garlick family.

Finally Sheila invited Lisa to give her presentation on '**Stoneleigh and Durham – a family link**'. Lisa explained how a DNA test and research in Stoneleigh Churchyard produced some surprising results.

Lisa's notes are attached to these minutes .

4. Sheila thanked all those who had presented their research and for the hard work that had been exerted. She also thanked the volunteers who had prepared refreshments for the evening.
5. The meeting finished for refreshments and further discussion.
6. The next meeting will be on the 25th of March. It will be the AGM and last year's minutes, the Chair's Report, Accounts for 2024 and the Treasurer's Report will all be sent out prior to the meeting. Jill Kashi will be giving a presentation on Mary Dormer Harris.