

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: SHS members and 4 guests

Apologies: Sheila Woolf, Roger Court, Shirley Ball, David Brooks, Celia Baly, Sue Crofts, Rachel & Philip Gill, Ken Wallis

Welcome: Margaret Wallis chaired the meeting in the absence of Sheila Woolf who was missing a meeting for the first time since the Society's inception in January 2011. Several notices were read out on Sheila's behalf:

Thanks were recorded to those SHS members who had offered assistance with the church history display in the Leigh Chapel during the village Duck Race in August, and to those who had come along over the Heritage Weekend in September. Members were encouraged to visit the exhibition themselves if they had not already done so and to encourage family and friends to visit it too.

Members were reminded that the Burial Database on the Society's website now includes many hundreds of mini-biographies of those buried in our churchyard. Volunteers are perhaps half way through!

David Fry, who gave a talk on old postcards of Stoneleigh last year, had sent details about a 'Postcard and Collectors Fair' to be held at Kenilworth School on Saturday October 7. 10.30 to 4 pm.

Whilst on holiday, Sheila had received information about a fund-raising event on Saturday 28 October in aid of the Harry Sunley Memorial Project. An illustrated talk on 'First Settlers: Early Times in the American South West' would be given by Ian George. Admission £5. (Details attached to these notes).

There was some sad news to report. Joan Dewhurst had died earlier in the month. She was a resident of 20 Stoneleigh Close for many years. The funeral will be in Stoneleigh Church at 12.45 on Friday 6 October, followed by cremation and a wake at Stoneleigh Village Club. Belinda, Ben and family would be pleased to see people who knew Joan and indeed her late husband, Jim. It was also announced that Alan Whitfield had died that morning. Alan was a great supporter of village activities, not least the Men's Choir and the Stop HS2 Action Group. Funeral arrangements would be announced later.

Finally, the next meeting would be held on 31 October. Anne Langley will give a talk about Warwick County Asylum which was set up to reform young offenders in the early 19th century. The talk will look at the history of this pioneering institution set in the context of Victorian crime and punishment. (NB It is a different place from the Hatton Asylum).

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Margaret then introduced the speaker, **Pete James** who gave a fascinating and nostalgic, illustrated, talk about **Coventry's Industrial Decline**.

In 1896 a disused cotton mill became the first car factory in the UK. It was Daimler whose first shareholders meeting was held in 1897. Many well-known

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car/cycle/motorcycle names were based in Coventry e.g. Rudge, Lea Francis, Humber & Hillman which became Rootes Group then Chrysler, Riley & Morris (Nuffield Group), Rover, Alvis, & Standard Triumph.

Simultaneously, a large machine tool industry developed, including Alfred Herbert, Coventry Gauge and Tool, and A.C.Wickman. Courtaulds introduced the manufacture of Viscose in Coventry in 1904. Dunlop Systems and Components supplied the aircraft industry. Jaguar moved from Holbrook Lane to Browns Lane where a huge fire caused extensive damage to cars there in 1957. Coventry Climax produced forklift trucks, fire pumps and Formula 1 car engines. Armstrong Siddeley merged with Bristol Aero Engines and became Rolls Royce. Standard Motors in Banner Lane (later to become Massey Ferguson) built 3.3 million tractors between 1946 and 2000.

In 1925 Peel Connor Telephone Works was established and this became GEC Telecommunications. Another name change which followed expansion was BTH Magneto Winding Department in Alma Street which became AEI then GEC.

The most recent casualty, in 2014, was Cash's which had opened as a ribbon maker in 1846. The name and some products were rescued, by a management / supplier takeover.

In recent years there has been some modest signs of a revival in local industry e.g. two firms :- Nissan & LTI are manufacturing taxis in Coventry. Jaguar Land Rover is collaborating with research teams at the University of Warwick with a view to electric car & battery manufacture in the near future. Automotive Products used to manufacture clutches & brake systems in Leamington until 1970. Detroit Electric have recently decided to manufacture electric cars in the town.

Pete answered several questions from a very interested audience and was thanked for his contribution.

Gill and Clive Watson were thanked for organising refreshments.