

NOTES OF THE SHS ZOOM MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2022

Present: Sheila Woolf, Sue Crofts, Margaret & Ken Wallis, Anthony Bianco Mel Dearing, Jane Taylor, Pete James, Nora Blagburn, Pam Baker, Jill Karshi, David Vaughan, Maggie Moorhouse, Ruth Oliver, Robert Kingston, Kate & Phil Jones, Derek Robinson, Sarah Ballinger, Paul Smith, Douglas Faulconbridge, June Burr, Lisa Reay.

Apologies: John Purcell, Sue Lines, Jean Vaughan, Adrian & Clare Clarke, Shirley Ball.

Announcements: Sheila reported that a SHS Committee meeting had been held on 24 January at which Clare Clarke was welcomed as a member, replacing Pam Baker who had retired. All Committee members would have to stand for re-election at the 2023 AGM. Pam was thanked for her invaluable help, especially with research and exhibitions.

Ideas for the Jubilee weekend had also been considered. Sheila had suggested that SHS might compile a ring-binder containing written memories from residents, plus photographs. Comments could be added by readers. The folder could be on display at the Club over the weekend (suitably 'guarded' by SHS members). The Parish Council was considering the suggestion of a beacon on 5 June. The Club had started planning – possibly a street party on 3 June with a prize for the best decorated table. Mugs for village children were also a possibility.

Sheila then gave a specially prepared talk on **'The Art of the Forgotten - 1875-1950'**

This talk had been inspired following Sheila's purchase of a painting of the Deer Park by Amy Brazil (exhibiting between 1889-1940). Her sister was Angela Brazil, best known for the stories about girls' schools, writing two books each year; she was also an artist ('The Angela Brazil Collection, housed in the Herbert Gallery).

Various groups of artists in Coventry in the late nineteenth century regretted the lack of an art gallery and museum in Coventry This was only rectified in mid-20thc when the Herbert Art Gallery opened.

Further research unearthed numerous artists who were well-known in their time but have since been forgotten. Most studied at the Coventry School of Art which was opened in 1863 and was designed by James Murray (who also designed the 'New Almshouses' in Stoneleigh). These included Florence Weston (she painted many scenes of old Coventry), Herbert Cox (Motslow Cottage and The Bank), G.L. Anderson (One of the headmaster's many children), and – of course – William Roseblade whose family had recently gifted a selection of his paintings to the SHS. Patty Townsend who painted the old Coventry marketplace as well as designed Christmas cards and and illustrated 'George Eliot – Her Early Life'.

Inevitably, George Eliot featured in Sheila's discoveries. Sydney Bunney – another student at the School of Art - painted a scene in Warwick Row featuring the school George Eliot attended (now Loveitt Estate Agents). In 1919 Mrs Herbert Draper of Kenilworth organised a gathering to celebrate the George Eliot's centenary which had a wide-ranging guest list, including Harold Kirby and his sister, Mary Ada, both of whom are buried in Stoneleigh churchyard...one of many connections with Stoneleigh.

Sheila owns a painting by Lucy Newsome which depicts the view across the river towards The Bank and towards the church and orchard. Lucy – another student of the School of Art - founded an art school in the Holyhead Road. She died in 1944 and is buried in the London Road cemetery. Her daughter, Dorothy Newsome-Glenn, was a well-known poster artist in collaboration with another Coventry-trained woman, Kay Nixon; their work included posters for P&O and for the East Bengal Railway!

Lord Leigh was very supportive of Coventry School of Art for many years. The artist John Anderson was the headmaster for 40 years and was extremely popular. His paintings include 'A Sunday Promenade', 'Finham Brook', 'Weavers in Coventry', 'Warwick Castle', 'A Peaceful Warwickshire Scene'. All his family were artists – George, Lilly, Douglas, Eleanor, Kate and Elsie. Many of them were talented sculptors and designers, some winning the Cash's prize for ribbon designs. Today however, if they are remembered at all, it is as the children of John Anderson, rather than in their own right.

Joseph Holt married Eleanor Anderson. He became Mayor of Coventry in 1939 but sadly she had died in 1936 so never became Lady Mayoress. but he had as his mayoral consort her younger sister, Kate Anderson.

Joseph Holt had been Secretary of the Coventry Provident Building Society. His assistant for more than 25 years was a Miss Codling. The Davenport desk which Sheila now owns was part of the Codling estate in 1983. It had been a gift to John Anderson by his students in 1875 (under the lid there is a plaque marking the date of the gift).

By the end of the presentation, the audience was in no doubt that Coventry had a rich 'hidden' art past but, thanks to Sheila's research, this was now less hidden and it was now clear that the links between Coventry artist and business communities had been extremely strong.

Thank you, Sheila!