

## NOTES OF THE SHS MEETING ON 22 FEBRUARY 2022

**Present:** 23 SHS members. No guests.

**Apologies:** Pam Baker, June Burr, John Purcell, David & Jean Vaughan, Liz Sykes, Adrian & Clare Clarke

**Welcome:** Sheila Woolf welcomed members back to the first 'live' meeting since 'Oscars Night' in November. She announced that Pam Baker had resigned from the SHS Committee and that Clare Clarke had been co-opted. (Condolences to Clare whose Mother had died recently). Sheila thanked Pam for all the work she had done since the Society's inception, especially research and displays. She also thanked Margaret, Sue and Sarah for their efforts with minutes, membership renewals and refreshments respectively.

Members were reminded that the AGM would be held on Tuesday 29 March. Details would be circulated during the week of 21 March. Elections would not be held until next year. The speaker would be Peter Huxford on '150 years since the foundation of the *National Society for Women's Suffrage*

The Committee had considered what SHS might do to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. A People's History would be prepared. An A4 lever arch folder would contain reminiscences and photographs of Stoneleigh during the Queen's reign. This would be on display in the Club during the Jubilee weekend. Villagers were being asked to send material to Sheila. In due course, help would be needed with interviewing, typing up, photocopying etc. An initial planning meeting of village organisations had been held at the Club and an event would be held on Friday 3 June. An SHS volunteer was sought to serve on the group; offers of help to Sheila, please.

Sheila then welcomed **Jill Kashi who spoke on Working Life at Baddesley Clinton 1923-1980.**

Jill had researched some of the key players, and interviewed others. Notable names were:-

*Rebecca Dering* who had married the owner (a member of the Ferrers family who had owned the house since the 1500s and were staunch Catholics) in 1867, was in effect the chatelaine of the house and initially she was regarded as 'the good fairy of Baddesley Clinton' but eventually she presided over its demise. By the 1920s many of the UK's country houses and estates were suffering due to a general decline in farming (partly due to American grain imports) but also the effects of World War 1 on both men and women. There was a decline in those wanting to go into domestic service as other employment opportunities opened up. Some staff's jobs disappeared or changed e.g. Rebecca insisted on travelling everywhere by coach but the later owner used a car (see below). The first sign of change during Rebecca's lifetime (she died in 1923) was *George Copage*, the gardener who was sacked even though Rebecca described him as 'my valued gardener, without any fault'.

*Captain Edward Arthur Ferrers* inherited the property after his father and Rebecca died. He managed to survive the new situation. There were fewer staff, many of them couples, but not as many lived in. One staff member, *Tom Hathin*, shared memories with Jill before his

death and referred to many traditions e.g. big family (including villagers) parties, development of the village school.

*Reg Clayton* was the Ferrers chauffeur 1924-39, hired at the young age of 17. He also looked after all the clocks in the house, looked after the temperamental generator, and trimmed excess ivy on the brickwork!

In the 1930s, *Cecil Ralph Ferrers* owned the house. He sold part of the farm, resulting in great uncertainty for tenant farmers. He also sold many art works. *Alice Cooper* was the only live-in servant during this time. After 400 years, Cecil put Baddesley Clinton on the market. This and the sale of other houses throughout the country gave non-agricultural people a chance to own property and much social climbing resulted. (NB Over many years, attempts had been made to sell the property to the National Trust, but this was not achieved until 1980).

One social climber was *Thomas Walker, the Elder*, who bought the house in 1940. He changed his name to Ferrers-Walker by deed poll. He had made his fortune through a buckles and fastenings factory in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. His wife, Undine, was known as a very friendly, chatty employer of an increased number of staff. There was some postwar restoration work, financed through reserved work during the War and proceeds from the factory. *Harold Haycock* became the driver of the Rolls Royce as well as general factotum. He was very friendly with Ferrers-Walker who was always on good terms with his staff and hosted many parties in which was a very cold house. He tried in vain to raise money leading tours around the house but eventually this was insufficient to save the house.

A vital staff member throughout this time was *Joan Pugh*, housekeeper after Undine's death. She regarded herself a cut above other staff so was not well-liked but she was highly respected and managed to keep the house going during its last years in private ownership. She share a love of cats with Ferrers-Walker the Elder. They had 2 dozen cats outside and 1 dozen inside the house! The cats were not given proper names, just descriptions. Numerous copies of 'Cat Fancy' magazine are in the Baddesley Clinton collection. The favourite cat 'The Beloved Grey Cat' lived to be 22 and an image of him is carved into WF's gravestone.

During 1970 and 80 the only person living in the house during the week was Joan Pugh. She maintained a ghost story that for 300 years a place was always laid at the dining table for the original Ferrers resident/ghost. She was responsible for the church. Less responsibly she fed the swans which in turn attracted numerous rats so Rentokil had to be called in. She drove a red Mini very quickly and her favourite radio programme was 'Hancock's Half Hour'. Jasper Carrot lived nearby in Knowle and she liked to talk to him in the shops. After the sale to the National Trust, Ferrers-Walker bought Joan a house in Lapworth; soon afterwards she married a widower but died in 1995.

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Sheila thanked Jill for a fascinating talk.

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