

NOTES OF THE SHE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022

Present: 15 SHS members

Apologies: Lisa Reay, Nora Blagburn, Phil Jones, John Purcell, Pam Baker, Anthony Bianco, Mel Dearing, Ken Wallis

Sheila Woolf welcomed members. She reported that she had spoken about Gibbet Hill Farmhouse at the Heritage Conference held in Coventry. Disappointingly, the application for recognition by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport had been received that morning; an appeal will be lodged.

There had been some discussion within the Committee about the Christmas Social on 13 December and it was proposed that there should be a raffle in aid of charity. Members would be invited to donate items and to buy tickets - more details at the next meeting on 29 November when John Purcell would speak on Earlsdon's Lost Industrial Heritage. During the Christmas Social we will have a few very short presentations from some members who have volunteered to speak about their historical researches

Sarah and her team were thanked for refreshments.

Sheila then introduced David Freke to speak on Church Graffiti.

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The word 'Graffiti' has had various meanings over thousands of centuries. Common current usage tends to mean it is a mark/symbol/writing scrawled over a surface in an insulting manner – vandalism - but it has also come to mean a piece of modern art (e.g. Banksy's murals). David's research in Warwickshire has defined it as the making of a mark, usually in stone, sometimes painted and usually – but by no means always – in churches. Such marks are hard to classify and the rates of erasure have varied – sometimes deliberate, more often wear and tear. Plenty of evidence remains of these marks, as a careful look of most church walls will testify, although Stoneleigh Church has very few examples.

We were shown an extensive array of examples of these marks. Some circular symbols, some overlapping/intersecting daisy wheels. Circles had particular power. They were usually drawn with a compass and then carved. Some sun dials (but often placed in areas where no sun reached!). Some 'compass wheels' were supposedly to ward off the devil. Dots were used as emphasis. There seemed to be endless variation.

There has been no national survey of such graffiti and county ones, such as Warwickshire's, are by no means complete. A fascinating area of research with much still to be done.

Sheila thanked David for such an interesting talk.

MSW/10/22