

## **NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON 24 MAY 2016 IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** 38 members (including two new ones) and 1 guest)

**Apologies:** Celia Baly and Pam Long

**Welcome:** Sheila Woolf welcomed everyone. She referred to the planned evening walk in Kenilworth on 28 June, to be led by Jan Cooper. The list was already full for this event. Details would be circulated later. The charge would be £2 per head out of which £50 would be paid to the Kenilworth Archaeological Society.

Arrangements were now in hand for the Earlsdon Research Society/SHS event at 4 pm on 1 July in St Barbara's Church in Earlsdon. Fliers were available. This would reflect on a century since the Battle of the Somme and would include exhibitions prepared by the two societies.

The next SHS meeting would be on 27 September. Pete Janes would talk about the Silk Weavers of Coventry.

**Sheila then welcomed David Fry.**

By way of introduction to his talk about old photographs from Warwickshire (and Stoneleigh in particular), David demonstrated the type of camera, and tripod, typically used for the photographs he showed us. Careful planning was required - none of the spontaneity and instant clicking of the modern age! During the Victorian era photographs were very expensive to produce and tended to be mainly stylised family portraits. Edwardian photographers were particularly interested in scenes and the advent of the postcard – and the ability to reproduce copies quickly (a 12 hour turnaround) – led to a flurry of interest.

Photographers tended not to seek permission beforehand but they developed a careful system of coding place and time/year particular photographs were taken. Cards were taken round to local shops and orders taken. Records show the huge popularity of cards, e.g. Twenty dozen depicting Kineton School were sold in their village shop in one day!

Local photographers included C. Adams of Castle End, Kenilworth and John Beck, M.J. Tunnicliffe and Ernest Bryan of Leamington. They took photographs all over Warwickshire, including Stoneleigh (especially the Abbey), and Tunnicliffe produced a 'Leafy Leamington' series which included Stoneleigh Church and Vicarage Road. Edgar Thomas Waterman of Spon Street, Coventry, captured Mr Wardell near the forge.

Herbert H. Thompson was a big name in postcard production in Stoneleigh in the inter-war years, using much faster German machinery. His many photographs of Stoneleigh were sold in the village shop/post office until it was bombed (that's what he said but we're not sure about that – will do some checking).

Photographers from further afield e.g. Harvey Barton from Bristol, visited Warwickshire and recorded scenes in Stoneleigh as well as factories in Coventry, for instance.

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Several amateur Edwardian photographers were active in Stoneleigh and the surrounding area. E.g. Martin Danks (1878-1942) who was a very affluent Earlsdon resident. Fred Hancox of Coventry was a working-class amateur who took several evocative photographs e.g. sheep crossing old Stare Bridge, a family group outside Antler Lodge in Stoneleigh Deer Park, and a group at a Territorial Army Camp in Stoneleigh.

Many photographers included shots of Stoneleigh Abbey in their collections but there were also various scenes from Stoneleigh Park, numerous shots of the Green, Church Lane and Vicarage Lane (especially Manor Farm), as well as the construction of Stare Bridge and the Old Smith's Shop and Café (taken in 1948 – remembered by some of the audience).

David's talk was illustrated by numerous old photographs which the audience greatly appreciated. Many members chatted with David afterwards and looked at the selection of old postcards he had brought with him. This was a thoroughly enjoyable and nostalgic evening.

After a vote of thanks, refreshments were served – many thanks to the evening's refreshment team, Jane Taylor and Sue Crofts.