

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STONELEIGH HISTORY SOCIETY HELD ON 26 JUNE 2018

Present: members of the SHS and guests (including several residents of the almshouses).

Apologies: Rob Orland, David and Janet Gibson, Pete James, Barbara Gee, David and Janet Gibson.

Welcome: Sheila Woolf welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. The Stitchers Booklet was available price £4 from Lisa at the meeting, otherwise available in the church vestry.
2. The Stoneleigh Duck Race and Fair would be held on Saturday 18 August from 1 pm. The 2019 Stoneleigh Calendar would be on sale, featuring a selection of photographs taken by Will Blagburn, profits in his memory to go to Myton Hospice.
3. On 12 July at 3.30 pm there would be a presentation about the new hanging in Ashow Church, followed by tea at the Ashow Club. Members were asked to let Margaret Wallis know if they planned to attend.
4. The next meeting would be in the Hall on Tuesday 25 September when Shirley Ball would speak about the Stoneleigh Village School.

Sheila then introduced **Philip Gill** to speak about '**The Residents of Dame Alice Leigh's Almshouses, Stoneleigh 1841 -1911**'. Philip had been working on this project since 2011 and it was a real labour of love. It was particularly appropriate that the book was launched on this day as the annual residents' lunch had been held. Thanks was due to the Trustees of the Almshouses who had paid for the publication.

Philip outlined the history of the almshouses which were endowed by Dame Alice Leigh, the original timber structure being stone clad in 1594 which is the date which appears on the buildings today. Little is known about the early residents who were usually former employees of the Leigh estate, or their widows, but a surprising number of them lived to an old age.

Philip outlined the sources used for his research and gave examples of the various residents who came from surprisingly varied backgrounds and by no means always directly associated with the Leigh Estate. This research has built up an impressive record of the inhabitants of the almshouses.

Philip also referred to 'the New Almshouses' or 'Widows' Almshouses', on the Birmingham Road. These were established in the 1850s by Margarett, the widow of Baron Chandos Leigh, and were primarily for widows. There was controversy about the architectural design. The original building was recorded as an almshouses until the 1901 census but was not identified as such in 1911 and in 1957 they were conveyed to the then Lord Leigh and then sold as private residences.

Thanks were paid to Sheila Woolf and Pam Baker for assistance with the preparation of the publication and the evening's presentation, plus Rachel.