

## NOTES OF THE SHS MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 30, 2018

**Present:** 26 SHS members, 6 visitors **including members of the Stoneleigh Community Orchard.**

**Apologies:** Janet and David Gibson, David and Jean Vaughan, Lisa Reay

**Welcome:** Sheila welcomed everyone to the meeting. -

- Volunteers are needed for the refreshment rota for 2019. Please contact Shirley Ball (01926 858094) as soon as possible.
- The next meeting will be on 30 November. The speaker will be Mike Sharpe who will talk about compiling family histories.
- Stoneleigh Calendars are still on sale. SHS is well into profit, so a healthy amount is due to be donated to Myton Hospice. Sheila still has copies for sale.
- Tickets for the WW1 event in Stoneleigh church on 16 November are still available, price £15. This was a collaborative event between SHS (Sheila Woolf), the church (Maggie Moorhouse) and the Stoneleigh Male Voice Choir (Phil Jones). There would be readings, conversation re-enactments, songs and a video of the Stoneleigh men on the roll of honour. Refreshments would be served. Proceeds would be split between the church and the British Legion. The support of SHS members at this event would be appreciated. Tickets available from Sheila (024 7641 8759)
- By an amazing coincidence, Sheila had discovered an account of the Coventry Blitz in a book she had bought in a flea market. She had traced the author's daughter (now 80 and living in Sussex) who had no idea of the notes' existence. BBC Coventry & Warwickshire will be interviewing Sheila on their morning show on 14 November, and the lady who is the-daughter of the diary-writer. During the day, snippets of the diary, with sound effects, plus music, will be played throughout the day. The station's social media page will also follow the story. There's a possibility that BBC Midlands Today will also follow this up.
- Details of the 2019 programme will be available at the November meeting and on the SHS website.
- Membership renewals will be taken shortly. **There will be a modest increase in membership fee.** The deadline for renewals will be in January. (Details shortly).

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Sheila then welcomed **Dr. Richard Churchley** who gave a fascinating talk, with plenty of illustrations sung **by** himself with and without appropriate musical instruments. Members joined in enthusiastically. The biggest influence on these songs were the Mummers Plays which were typically performed between October and December, can be traced back to Pagan times, and had as their main tenet that everything dies but comes back to life. Essentially, they were a way for labourers to earn some extra money. The plays were very localised, and the words tended to be passed from father to son. Very formulaic, typically the plays involved a 'goody' (St. George or King George), a 'baddy' (often a Turkish knight, a custom dating back to the Crusades), a fight between the two and the intervention of a Doctor. Sometimes the hero ran off with a woman (aka a man dressed and often blacked up). The plays usually ended with a begging song aimed at the lord of the manor, or similar local grandee.

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Richard then sang a series of songs associated with the plays and explained the way in which Cecil Sharpe and colleagues began collecting the words and songs so that they would not be lost to future generations. The Folk Music Society was eventually founded. A huge effort was made to talk to numerous people, including performers, associated with these songs and interviews were held and eventually recorded so that 'the voice of the labourer' was recorded for posterity. Not only were words and music recorded but maypole and Morris dance steps/manoeuvres were carefully noted. Eventually a songbook was prepared, and this was sent to all schools, hence the preservation of songs such as 'D'ye ken John Peel?'

John introduced various songs together with a description of their origin and association with different parts of Warwickshire and Worcestershire, ending with one dedicated to the Warwickshire Horse Artillery This song had several variations, including one sung for us by a visiting Australian.

This presentation was greeted enthusiastically by SHS members.

Thanks to Rachel and Sheila for refreshments, and to the Stoneleigh Community Orchard for providing Stoneleigh cider and perry.

MSW 8/11/18